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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Cachet D. Burks

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

African American Men's Negative Personal Experiences With and Trust in Police

by

Cachet D. Burks

MS, Walden University, 2016

BA, Alvernia University, 2013

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Forensic Psychology

Walden University

February 2021

Abstract

African American men's negative experiences with the police have impacted their trust of police. Many African American men have experienced psychological trauma, more specifically posttraumatic stress disorder, due to their encounters with police. As a result of these negative personal experiences, their reporting of crimes has decreased significantly, and gun-related violence is going unreported. There is limited literature on this topic. The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological analysis was to explore the negative personal experiences that some African American men have with police officers and their experiences of trust of law enforcement. Personal construct theory, which is a theory that helps explain how a person processes a past event and then allows them to anticipate future events, guided this study. Data were collected in semi structured interviews with 10 African American men who had negative personal experiences with police. The following themes emerged from their responses: encounter with the police, helplessness, and what trust looks like with the police. The study has implications for positive social change including the potential to address the issue of trust between African American men and law enforcement, which can have positive effects on African American communities through the reporting of crimes and diminishing the fear of police. With more crimes reported, police can surveille areas that need a heavier presence of law enforcement to make the community feel safer.

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Dedication

First and foremost, I dedicate this dissertation to Allah. Without Allah I would not be here today. To my children, Haniyah, Somaya, Aanye, Rahsaan, and Sarah, you guys are my world. To my husband, thank you for the encouragement because there were times when I wanted to give up and you would look at me and tell me that giving up was not an option. You passed right before I finished but I know you are still watching over me. I love you. Lastly, I would also like to dedicate this proposal to all of the African American men and women who have lost their lives due to police violence.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express how grateful I am to have the members of my committee as well as the support from my friends and family.

To my chair, Dr. Sharon Xuereb, thank you for your support, your patience, and your guidance. Your feedback was always prompt, which was helpful for a nervous individual like me.

To Dr. Ethel Perry, thank you for your honesty and attention to detail.

To Loni, thank you for catching all the small errors!

To my friends and family, thank you for not allowing me to give up. Thank you for listening to me complain, cry, yell, and then get it all together just so I could do the same thing the next day. I love you all.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The negative personal experiences that African American men endure at the hands of the police have impacted their trust of police (Payne et al., 2017). Negative personal experiences, such as beatings (Desmond et al., 2016) and being hyper-surveilled (Sewell et al., 2016), are ongoing issues for African American men brought on by police. According to Stepler (2016), African Americans are 84% more likely to have a negative experience with police than any other race. According to McFarland et al. (2018), the maltreatment of African American men by police has been considered a public health concern. Having their trust in the police broken due to negative personal experiences has led to a decline in criminal reports (Brunson & Wade, 2019) and parents being forced to educate a new generation of African American men on how to survive interactions with the police by giving them "the talk" (Whitaker & Snell, 2016). Parents are forced to give "the talk" to their African American sons because they cannot protect them so their sons must learn how to survive an encounter with the police and/or try to avoid them by wearing certain clothes so as to not attract unnecessary attention, not making direct eye contact with police officers, not moving their hands too much in the presence of an officer, and not doing anything that could potentially frighten an officer (Whitaker & Snell, 2016).

There are extant studies on African American men's personal experiences with police and how they impact their trust of police (Long & Joseph-Salisbury, 2019). However, these studies are limited, and researchers want to continue to bring awareness

to this subject matter. This study will add to an existing body of knowledge that will continue to educate future scholars and bring awareness to law enforcement officials.

The focus of this study was exploring how the negative personal experiences that some African American men have with police officers impact their trust of police. Positive social change may result from this study by educating law enforcement officials, which could encourage them to improve community policing and create cultural competency awareness programs. Another social change implication could be bridging the gap of communication between law enforcement and the African American community.

In this chapter, I provide a synopsis of the study and the reason for its importance. This chapter includes a discussion of the background, problem statement, purpose statement, theoretical framework, research questions, nature of the study, definition of key terms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study.

Background

The mistreatment of African Americans within their community by police has been an issue for many years. Looking back as far as the days of Jim Crow, the ways in which the African American community was treated (e.g., being beaten and imprisoned for crimes they did not commit) was unjust (Brooks et al., 2016). The Jim Crow laws were racially driven and put in place as a means of completely segregating African Americans and European Americans while turning a blind eye to acts of violence (Brown, 2019). According to Hockin and Brunson (2018), African American men have

continued to have more negative encounters with law enforcement then European American men. These negative personal experiences with law enforcement cannot just be categorized as one particular type because African American men have a variety of negative experiences.

Stop and frisk was a controversial law that has negatively impacted the African American community. It was recognized as being an extreme example of racial inequality (Kramer & Remster, 2018) and a personal experience that many African American men have encountered (Kate & Threadcraft, 2017). This particular law states that, "police are given the ability to detain and frisk an individual for whom they had reasonable suspicion has been, is, or will be engaged in a criminal activity and may be armed and presently dangerous" (Kramer & Remster, 2018, p. 969). According to Kwate and Threadcraft (2017), in the mid to late 1990s, African American men were sought out by police officers during their patrol, and thousands of men were stopped, searched, and placed in prison. African American men are still being arrested at an alarming rate, accounting for more than half of the men (i.e., 8,315 out of a total of 12,179 men) who were stop and frisked in New York in 2019 (New York City Police Department, n.d.).

More extreme forms of mistreatment by law enforcement have resulted in killings by police (Tolliver et al., 2016). According to Stagger-Hakim (2016), public health statistics suggest that African American men have the poorest life expectancy, with police homicide being recognized as a risk factor.

Studies have shown that as a result of negative personal experiences by police, African American men's trust in the police has been lost (Novich & Hunt, 2018). African

American men have a lack of confidence in law enforcement and their ability to support them in their time of need (Hockin & Brunson, 2018). Along with this lack of confidence, there is a significant increase in fear from earlier times (Staggers-Hakim, 2016). Not only are African American men affected by this, but so is the African American community as a whole. Many African American communities have a history of not trusting law enforcement because of the mistreatment of their residents and have educated new generations to adopt similar feelings (Bent-Goodley & Smith, 2017).

African American men continue to deal with this disturbing issue. Brooks et al. (2016) provided insight into the lived experience of several Black men and their relationships with and perceptions of law enforcement. Novich and Hunt (2018) alluded to the problems that are related to distrust of law enforcement from African American men. Lastly, Sewell et al. (2016) researched how African American men being hyper-surveilled and presumed to be criminals affects their trust of police as well. The existing literature has been helpful in identifying the subject as it relates to African American men and their trust of police; however, there is still a gap in knowledge. Smith Lee and Robinson (2019) have acknowledged that African American men experience mistreatment at the hands of police, and this plays a role in their trust of police. According to Smith Lee and Robinson, more research needs to be conducted in order to bring awareness to this subject. I conducted this study to address this gap in knowledge.

Problem Statement

The African American community, specifically African American men, experience mistreatment at the hands of the police at a greater rate than any other race

(Adedoyin et al., 2019). Many African American men believe that they are intended targets of racial profiling (Johnson, 2018). African American men have reported feeling that they are being profiled as criminals because of their ethnicity, brutally beaten, imprisoned, and given harsher sentences than someone of another race (Adedoyin et al., 2019). African American men have also shared that they are pulled over and not provided with a reason for the stop (Epp et al., 2017). Some African American men believe that they endure harsh treatment because of the color of their skin, and this belief has a negative impact on how much they trust law enforcement (Brooks et al., 2016). There are some African American men who experience being hyper-surveilled, watched heavily in their own communities, or are threatened of being incarcerated by police and are presumed to be criminals, which negatively impacts the trust they have in law enforcement (Sewell et al., 2016).

The African American community's distrust of law enforcement can be manifested by not filing criminal reports after being victimized (Slocum, 2018), not feeling safe in the presence of police (Sewell et al., 2016), and raising the next generation of African American men to believe that they are targets and educating them on ways to avoid police contact in order to stay alive (Moore et al., 2017). The loss of trust has even been as significant as not reporting gun violence that has resulted in murder (Brunsun & Wade, 2017).

However, there is limited research on the specific negative personal experiences of African American men with police to identify how their individualized experiences have impacted their trust in law enforcement (Smith Lee & Robinson, 2019). This topic

should be investigated further. It is important to understand that these specific negative experiences have altered the way some African American men view law enforcement, producing a significant amount of fear of communicating with police, which ultimately results in them not trusting law enforcement (Slocum, 2015). This loss of trust impacts the way some African American men raise their children, passing on negative thoughts and sharing negative experiences with their kids. This practice is creating a new generation of African American men who do not trust police officers before they have even encountered them (Smith Lee & Robinson, 2019).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the negative personal experiences that some African American men have with police officers and their trust of law enforcement. The findings from this study could assist with educating police on how their negative interactions play a significant role in some African American males' trust of police. This could help develop and/or improve training on cultural competency and awareness, helping to establish better community policing programs (Bent-Goodley & Smith, 2017). Smith Lee and Robinson (2019) argued that it is important to understand what personal experiences African American men have endured (e.g., physical violence, unjustified stops, or witnessed violence), which would provide insight as to why some African American men have a negative perception of police and how that has caused a decrease in trust.

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd was killed by three Minneapolis, Minnesota police officers, while a fourth officer watched, over an alleged counterfeit $20 bill (Hill et

al., 2020). Hill et al. (2020) explained that when the police arrived, Mr. Floyd never resisted, he never argued, and he complied with all requests. Mr. Floyd was thrown to the ground, pinned there for 8 minutes and 46 seconds as he screamed and begged for his life to be spared. The three police officers placed their knees in his back and in his neck, which restricted his airflow. Bystanders screamed at the officers, begging and pleading for Mr. Floyd's life to be spared; however, the officers did not move until the ambulance arrived. By this time Mr. Floyd was deceased. The recent death of Mr. Floyd has caused significant fear and outrage in the African American community and increased the fear experienced by many African American men (Altman, 2020). However, with this fear and outrage, African American communities have come together across the United States and are fighting for change (Altman, 2020). This is one of the many examples of why African American men have a loss of trust in police, which is discussed at length throughout this study.

Research Questions

The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore how the negative personal experiences of some African American men influence how they trust law enforcement. The following two research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are African American men's personal experiences with police officers?

RQ2: What are African American men's experiences of trusting law enforcement?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical base for this study was the personal construct theory (PCT). PCT is a social psychological theory that focuses on how an individual processes a past event and, from that event, anticipates future events (Kelly, 1992). According to PCT, a person has a set of beliefs that exists because of a certain experience. A person then puts these beliefs and impressions to the test, and if a similar incident occurs but has a different outcome, that individual's constructs then change (e.g., increase in fear or decrease in trust); however, if the outcome is the same, these set beliefs are strengthened (Kelly, 1992).

So, for example, an African American male is walking down the street and a police car stops him, begins to search him, and when they find nothing, they tell him he can go home because "it was just a simple case of a mistaken identity." The African American male thinks he is being targeted because of his ethnicity. This same African American male is approached several weeks later, stopped and frisked in the same neighborhood by a different officer, and is provided with the same reason as before for the stop and frisk. His feeling of being targeted because of his ethnicity has been strengthened and will now cause his trust in law enforcement to decrease.

I selected PCT for this study because it acknowledges that an individual's personal experiences affect the way a person views as well as interacts with others (see Winter, 2015). In relation to the current study, PCT helped explain the negative personal experiences that have caused African American males' lack of trust with police.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was qualitative. The qualitative approach provides an understanding of an individual's experience, behaviors, beliefs, and interactions (Patrik & Corte, 2019). I used an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach to help guide the study. The IPA helps explore how individuals make sense of their lived experiences (Smith, 2017). This approach allows an individual to provide an in-depth representation of what and how they may have experienced an event (Brooks et al., 2020). Using IPA was the most suitable qualitative approach for this study because it allowed for a focus on an individual and their lived experience and how this experience helps form an opinion moving forward with that person or object that the individual had the experience with (see Smith, 2017).

Definition of Key Terms

When conducting research, it is ideal for key terms to be identified to provide the readers with the utmost understanding of the material. The following key terms are used in this study:

African American men: A specific gender within a diverse group of Black people who have ancestors who originate from the continent of Africa.

Black Lives Matter: A movement that was created by three women as a call to action in response to the anti-Black racism in the United States (Lynch, 2018).

Law enforcement: Members of a local or government agency who enforce the law, make arrests, and investigate crimes (Brooks et al., 2016).

Lived experience: An individual's perception of events (Brooks et al., 2015).

Negative experiences: An unwanted personal encounter of discriminatory, disrespectful, or abusive police behavior toward a person (Novich & Hunt, 2018).

Personal construct theory (PCT): A social psychological theory that focuses on how an individual processes a past event, and from that event, anticipates future events (Kelly, 1992).

Police: Agents of social control in communities that cannot adequately control themselves (Logan & Oakley, 2017).

Stop and frisk: A law that states "police are given the ability to detain and frisk an individual for whom they had reasonable suspicion has been, is, or will be engaged in a criminal activity or may be armed and presently dangerous" (Kramer & Remster, 2018, 969).

Trust: A psychological state in which a person recognizes a potential for harm from another and accept the possibility (Kearns et al., 2020).

Assumptions

When conducting a study, assumptions are made. Within this study, I assumed that the participants would be open and honest with me about their personal experiences with law enforcement. If the participants were not honest or did not provide full details of an event, this would have limited the validity of the data collected. Another assumption was that I would not need to interview more than 10 participants to reach data saturation. The greater the number of participants, the higher the possibility that the data collected will be similar. Finally, I also assumed that the participants would not be fearful and would fully participate in the study.

Scope and Delimitations

In this study, I examined the negative personal experiences of African American men with police and how these experiences impacted their trust of police. The participants selected for the study were African American men above the age of 18 years old who had experienced mistreatment by police. The focus of the study was African American men; therefore, women were excluded from the study. Other exclusions were individuals who refer to themselves as Black or Brown but are not of African descent as well as individuals who identify as being White. Hence, the findings may only be applied to these populations with great caution.

Limitations

When conducting research there will always be some form of limitations. Some of the potential limitations of this study were : (a) due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were only conducted via Zoom and Facetime, which limited my ability to document participants' body language observed during the interviews; (b) social media was the only available means for soliciting participants because many facilities were closed due to the pandemic and flyers could not be distributed in many places due to restrictions caused by COVID-19 (e.g., barbershops and hair salons are only allowing individuals to enter their facilities by appointment due to the rising number of COVID-19 cases where I reside; (c) certain sectors of the population who do not frequently use social media did not have the opportunity to take part; (d) based on the nature of solicitation for participants, which was the use of social media, I was limited to enrolling participants from a younger age bracket; and (e) the availability of time and a location for

conducting these virtual interviews because the privacy of the participants was of the utmost importance.

Significance

This research has filled a gap in understanding of the negative personal experiences of African American men and how these experiences have impacted their relationship with law enforcement as it relates to trust. This study is significant because it brings awareness to a topic that has for decades been an area of concern for African American men (see Brooks et al., 2016). The data from this study can provide high ranking officials in law enforcement with a better understanding of how some law enforcement personnel's actions have negatively affected African American men. Additionally, this newfound knowledge can be used to create training programs for both incoming and veteran police officers. These training programs could focus on cultural competency and awareness as well as help mend the broken relationship that currently exists between African American men and law enforcement.

In the context of positive social change, addressing the issues of trust among African American men and law enforcement can positively affect communities in many ways, one being African American men feeling comfortable enough to report crimes, whether they have witnessed a crime or they were actual victims of a crime (see Novich & Hunt, 2018). With more crimes being reported, police can have a heavier presence in certain areas, which will make residents in those neighborhoods feel safer.

Summary

Currently, there is literature on the negative experiences of African American men with police and how that impacts their trust of police. However, more research needs to be conducted on this subject. Historically, to see change, research must be conducted, data must be shared, and people must be educated. This study will serve as an addition to an existing body of knowledge on the topic.

In this chapter, I have provided a clear understanding of the study in the introduction. The background of the study was presented, and the problem statement was discussed along with the purpose statement. I also highlighted the gap in the literature. Two research questions were developed for the study. PCT was used as the theoretical framework to guide the study. In this chapter, I also discussed the nature of the study, provided eight definitions of key terms, and explained the significance of the study. Lastly, the assumptions, limitations, and the scope and delimitations of the study were provided.

In Chapter 2, I will provide an overview of the literature search strategy, the theoretical framework that guided this study, and a review of the relevant literature on the topic. Chapter 2 will conclude with a summary.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

African American men have experienced mistreatment at the hands of law enforcement, which has impacted their trust of police for many years (Obasogie & Newman, 2017). Recently, there has been an increase in literature being produced on this subject. Social media platforms are allowing for the sharing of negative encounters, and a new movement that goes by the name of Black Lives Matter has been bringing awareness to the subject. Some African American men have developed posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Graham et al., 2017) and have also developed a sense of learned helplessness (Najdowski et al., 2015) due to their negative experiences with law enforcement. Therefore, the purpose of this IPA study was to explore the negative personal experiences that some African American men have with police officers and how these experiences affected their trust of law enforcement. This study provides better insight into African American males' negative perception of police (see Smith Lee & Robinson, 2019).

In this literature review, I continue to elaborate on the existing information provided in the background section of Chapter 1 before outlining the literature search strategy and discussing PCT as the theoretical framework that guided this study. In addition, recent literature is reviewed to discuss stop and frisk, a conditioning of helplessness, and a familiar phrase in the African American community, 'the talk." Police brutality and trust of police are the final topics. Lastly, I summarize the relevant literature and conclude with an explanation of how the current study addresses the gap in the literature.

Literature Search Strategy

To obtain peer-reviewed articles and journals for this study, I conducted searches through the EBSCO database, accessed via the Walden University Library, and more specifically, under the subject of psychology. The Google Scholar, ProQuest Ebook Central, ProQuest INFO, SAGE Journals, MedPub and ResearchGate databases were also searched. Dissertations from the ProQuest Dissertations & Thesis database of the Walden University Library were another source of literature. The literature reviewed for this study was all published in the last 5 years. The key search terms and combinations that were used when conducting the literature search were: *experience, Black males, relationships, phenomenological research, personal construct, the talk, police brutality, stop and frisk, Black lives matter, mistreatment, African American community, negative experience, learned helplessness, interpretative phenomenological analysis, Black men, African American men, law enforcement, police, cops, trust, personal construct theory, lived experience, results or outcomes, perception, police brutality,* and *impact, effect or influence.*

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical base for this study was PCT. PCT is a social psychological theory that focuses on how an individual anticipates future events based on how they process past events (Kelly, 1992). According to PCT, there are beliefs an individual has that exist because of a certain experience; when the individual has another experience, those beliefs and feelings are put to the test. If a similar incident occurs and a different outcome is resulted, that individual's constructs then change (e.g., an increase in fear or decrease in

trust). Additionally, if the outcome is the same, these set beliefs are strengthened (Kelly, 1991). Through this theory, I explored negative personal experiences that have caused African American males' lack of trust of police. According to Kelly (1955), human beings look through the world in transparent patterns or templates. More specifically, individuals look at the world from their perceptions, trying to find a reason to help them make sense of and or justify an event. An example of this would be an African American man feeling that his perceptions of police racial profiling African American men may be justified after he is pulled over several times and his vehicle is searched for no reason, but he never sees this done to a European American person. It is suggested that this is how all human beings view the world of events (Kelly, 1955). Additionally, it is believed that without people being able to interpret events as they see them, they will be unable to make sense of the world.

According to Kelly (1955), PCT starts with a basic assumption known as the fundamental postulate: A person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which they anticipate events. Suggesting that whatever an individual expects to happen will determine their choice of action (Fisher, 2017). Kelly (1991) then stated the postulate is broken down into eleven corollaries, which are:

1. *Construction corollary*: An individual approaches the future by looking at what appears to be a similar past experience, basing their actions on those previous events. For example, some African American men are fearful of purchasing certain cars because they know several African American men

who have that car and have been pulled over by police without being given a reason.

2. *Individuality corollary*: Everyone has their own perceptions. For example, African American men may view being stopped by police as being harassed, while police see it as ensuring the safety of the community.
3. *Organization corollary*: Individuals create a ranked construct system. For example, an African American man was recently pulled over and given a ticket for having tinted windows after his car was searched, but he does not have tinted windows and found out that his family is planning to have a gathering the same day he has a court appearance for the ticket. He has to decide what is more important.
4. *Dichotomy corollary*: All personal constructs are dichotomous (i.e., a person construes events by viewing them in two ways, such as good versus bad, easy versus hard, or happy versus sad).
5. *Choice corollary*: An individual makes the choice of what alternative provides the best chances of confirming a construct. For example, a man is given two choices: He is going to attempt to choose the option that he thinks gives him the greater chance of proving him right.
6. *Range corollary*: There are certain descriptions that apply to certain objects and some descriptions that do not. For example, a fur coat may be “warm, sexy, and stylish” but a peach may not be.

7. *Experience corollary*: An individual's constructs are always changing based on their experiences. For example, an African American man encounters the police and every time he has an encounter with the police his experience is different, which seems to change his outlook on police each time.
8. *Modulation corollary*: An individual's construct will only be as flexible as the individual allows for it to be. For example, an African American man was pulled over, he thought he was being racially profiled but before jumping to conclusions he decided to speak to the officer first and then form an opinion.
9. *Fragmentation corollary*: Contradictory constructs can be maintained at the same time. For example, an African American man is very quiet and compliant when officers are involved, but when speaking to family and friends this same man states he is very vocal and refuses to comply when he encounters a police officer regardless of whether he has done something wrong.
10. *Commonality corollary*: The saying goes, "Great minds think alike." For example, two friends who are both African American, begin to share stories of their encounters they had with police. At the end of their discussion, they both agree that they believe that police racially profile African American men.
11. *Sociality corollary*: Take the time to understand someone and maybe future interactions with them can take place in a positive and meaningful way. For example, if local law enforcement expanded their community policing programs, they would be able to communicate more effectively with the

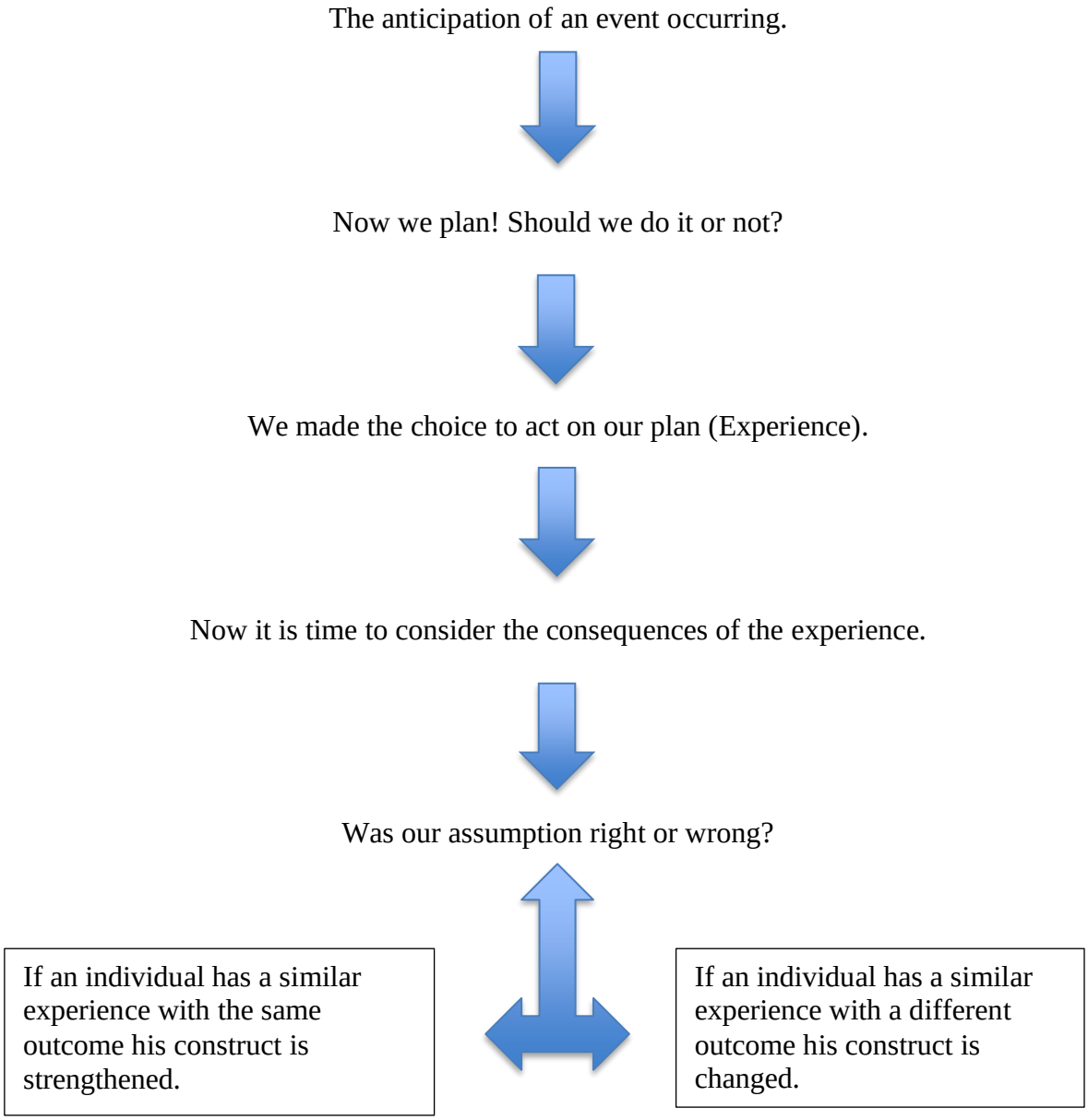
African American community to gain a better understanding of where their loss of trust comes from.

Kelly (1955) explained that people are scientists, and as scientists, they develop hypotheses that they constantly test and revise time and time again as they attempt to make sense of their experiences. Kelly suggested that how an individual makes sense of themselves and the world around them affects how they make decisions. Kelly developed the above-mentioned 11 corollaries to explain how individuals make their decisions. Corollaries are best understood as different ways an individual interprets their lived experience.

Additionally, PCT provides a concise understanding of the cycle a person goes through when experiencing an event that either confirms or changes their construct (Fisher, 2017; see Figure 1). This figure shows that an individual first anticipates an event is going to occur. Next, the individual has to decide what they are going to do and what their plan is Then it is assumed that the individual has made their choice. Now that the choice has been made, there will be consequences. Next, the individual is left to see if their assumption was accurate. If an individual has a similar experience with the same outcome, their construct is strengthened. If an individual has a similar experience with the different outcome, their construct is changed.

Figure 1

Explanation of the Cycle of Kelly's Personal Constructs



Note. When reading Figure 1, the reader should begin from the top of the page down.

When looking for literature and research-based analysis on how the theory has been applied previously in studies about African American men and their negative personal experiences with police and their trust of police, I found there were none. However, during my search I was able to identify literature on PCT, the abuse of power, social support, and trust. PCT has been used in studies to help explain how an individual develops constructs of the world in an effort to make sense of their surroundings and help anticipate events. More specifically, a study was conducted on African asylum seekers currently residing in England (O'Toole Thommessen et al., 2017). PCT was used as the theoretical framework to guide the study in an effort to explain the way participants interpreted their experiences and events, which allowed them to incorporate a sense of empowerment. Participants described feeling less than and spoken down to. Additionally, participants voiced not being treated fairly when it came to educational and employment opportunities and having a lack of trust for those who they felt should have been kinder. To the participants, their experience was equivalent to still residing in Africa.

Within this particular study, multiple constructs were created by the participants based on certain themes, i.e. England and Personal life (O'Toole Thommessen et al., 2017). When the word England was mentioned, negative constructs were shared by the participants, bringing up memories of being in Africa as well as current feelings based on how they have been treated by people in power and local nationals, which has caused a loss of trust. When the phrase personal life was mentioned, positive constructs were expressed by participants, reminding them of family and being loved and supported (O'Toole Thommessen et al., 2017). The participants were all victims of unspeakable

acts of violence when residing in Africa. According to O'Toole Thommessen et al. (2017), PCT was an effective framework to use for this study. PCT provided a connection for the participants to understand how the mistreatment and lack of trust due to their past experiences helped to shape their view of the world today as asylum seekers living in England. The participants of this study were able to reflect deeply on their experience in their asylum-country and the many difficult situations they found themselves to be in at times (O'Toole Thommessen et al., 2017). The focus of the study was to explore the importance of social support in asylum seeking youth by exploring personal constructs, which was effective. Additionally, the researchers realized that providing the additional support for the participant's constructs would facilitate a more positive development.

Another study underpinned by PCT was Mullinuex et al.'s (2019) study on probation officers and their use of personal knowledge when making professional judgments about individuals on probation and their risk. The participants were presented with three names of individuals who were currently on probation that they recently completed a reoffending assessment on. Each participant was then asked to identify 10 to 14 similarities and differences, also known as constructs. Next, themes/categories were created, and each similarity/difference was placed with the appropriate theme. What researchers realized was that the majority of the constructs that were created were personal not professional in nature, recognizing that there is a clear bias. The probation officers were anticipating specific events e.g. abuse of a substance from the individuals on probation. PCT helped shed light on the bias that the probation officers had. They

were appreciative of this in the study and used this as a learning tool to help build their knowledge and understanding on the subject.

PCT was selected to guide the current study because it is a model that focuses on the individual, specifically their interactions with others and in their own world (Fisher, 2017). This is a theory that gives power back to the individual (Fisher, 2017). As it relates to the current study, African American men are more likely to be subjected to excessive force by police (Ajilore & Shirey, 2017) or experience other forms of less than desirable treatment. These negative personal experiences have caused a loss of trust in police. PCT helps to provide an understanding of how the loss of trust towards police has developed, which will be explored by discussing the following points in this literature review: stop and frisk, learned helplessness, and police brutality. This helps to understand the literature relating to the purpose of this study, which is to provide an understanding of the African American males' experience and how they make sense of the world around them.

Literature Review Related to Key Variable and Concepts

An extensive search of literature about the negative personal experience of African American men by police and how that impact trust of police was conducted. Through this search I was able to find articles that detailed how African American men lose trust in police. The literature suggests that there is limited accountability after African American men are beaten (Philogene, 2019), some African American men have specific conversations with their parents geared towards not trusting law enforcement (Cintron et al., 2019), while some African American men are willing to withhold

pertinent information about gun violence due to previous mistreatment (Brunson & Wade, 2019). Although I was successful in finding the appropriate literature to help support this study, it was recommended that research continue to be conducted. This would serve as an addition to an existing body of knowledge, educating future scholars. To help aide in educating future scholars key concepts and variables will be discussed, they are: Historical relationship between African Americans and police, trust of police, stop and frisk, the talk, learned helplessness, police brutality, and police training and community policing programs.

Historical Relationship Between African Americans and Police

With a new executive order in place to help establish trust within the African American community, there are still significant barriers that will need to be broken down. According to Burgason (2017), an individual can be satisfied with a police officer and their performance, however, they still may not trust that officer. That same individual can have a positive attitude towards law enforcement but still not trust police. This unsteady level of trust with police among African Americans is nothing new.

Trust of police is a subject that is deeply rooted in the African American community, dating back to slavery. During slavery, police were comprised of groups of White men who volunteered to seek out slaves who ran away from their owners (Laurence, 2019). Once the slave was caught a number of things could have happened to them such as: limbs being amputated, women being raped or being beaten until they fall weak (Lawrence, 2019). Moving forward, several decades to a time known as the Jim Crow era; during this time known members of the Klu Klux Klan were joining the police

force and brutally assaulting African Americans, turning a blind eye to crimes against the African American community, and enforcing segregation laws beyond what the scope of the law required (Moran, 2017). Greer and Spalding (2017) found that older African American women may have struggled significantly with racism when they were younger. However, as older adults they have managed to find coping skills to deal with their past and current racial disparities, showing some depressive symptoms. This study also suggested that a younger generation of African American women appear to struggle significantly with depression as well as increased anxiety.

Recently, there has been an increase of unarmed African American men who are being murdered by police, and these officers have not been prosecuted, which has left the African American community enraged. This has also contributed to the steady decline in trust of police (Hockin & Brunson, 2018). With what appears to be a significant background of hurt, pain, mistrust and anger towards the police in the African American community, it appears that passing on this reduced sense of trust through generations is how things such as, 'the talk' evolved. Additionally, Burgason (2017) suggested that when a person truly trusts the officers in their communities, this is the only time they will get the full respect and cooperation of the citizens they serve. Next, trust of police will be discussed, providing insight into what trusting the police looks like for African American men, while also looking at how and why the levels of trust have decreased.

Trust of Police

Many people hear the word trust and believe that members of law enforcement have good intentions and are competent to complete tasks that are given to them (Kearns

et al., 2020). However, according to Kearns et al. (2020), members of the African American community associate the word trust and law enforcement differently. Instead, the African American community relates trust to a person who recognizes potential harm from another individual and accepts the possibility. More specifically, the African American community may trust police e.g. keeping the community safe by arresting individuals who commit acts of crime, but even with trusting the police they are prepared for them to hurt them emotionally or physically. Members of the African American community have continued to lose trust in police due to mistreatment, more specifically African American men. African American men are racially profiled by police and when this happens it not only affects the individual, but it also affects the African American community and its trust in police (Burgason, 2017). Burgason (2017) explained that even witnessing police doing something wrong can lower their opinion of how they view the police, this information is then internalized and shared throughout the African American community.

Trust as it relates to police looks different for everyone. An individual's situation and how they were treated by police determines how much trust is given, if any. Some African American men will choose to ignore gun violence by not filing police reports over trusting the police (Highwater & Esmail, 2015). Not reporting acts of violence continues to put people in the community where the violence occurred in danger. Kearn et al. (2020) stated, when people view police as legitimate and trustworthy individuals, they are more likely to cooperate with police, comply with their directions and report crimes. There are individuals in African American communities who are taking matters

into their own hands, seeking revenge on those who may have committed wrongful acts towards them, instead of reporting crimes to the police (Akinlabi, 2020). Many African American men do not trust police because of their initial encounters (Brunson & Wade, 2019). Novich and Hunt (2018) suggested that many African American men report walking down the street and being stopped for no reason; or walking down the street and police stopping them and placing them under arrest and never explaining why; or playing a game of basketball and officers telling a group of African American men to leave, it is reported an argument began and an officer drew his weapon and shoots one of the men who had no weapon.

For many African American men, their trust of police began to deplete with their personal experience, but with the increase in social media outlets and news reportings of African American men being killed, the amount of trust has dropped drastically (Kochel, 2019). The killing of Tamir Rice, a 12 year old with a toy gun (Garrison, 2018); Michael Brown, an 18 year old African American boy who was shot and killed by a police officer even though he was unarmed (Onyemaobim, 2016); or Eric Garner, a 33 year old African American man killed by a police officer using lethal force; Chock hold (Marcus, 2016) are just some of the many names of African American males who were killed that have caused this heightened fear in African American men, which has impacted the trust African American men have of police (Smith Lee & Robinson, 2019).

The significant disconnect as related to the trust within the African American community, more specifically African American men and law enforcement, was noticed by President Obama, and to address this ongoing issue he signed an executive order to

establish a task force on 21st century policing (McManus et al., 2019). The goal was to identify best practices in policing and to offer recommendations to local law enforcement agencies on ways in which they might promote effective crime reduction while building public trust (McManus et al., 2019). This executive order has been effective. However, stop and frisk is one of the many challenges African American men still face that has caused a loss of trust with police.

Stop and Frisk

Many African American men believe that they are racially profiled (Aymer, 2016). This means, African American men believe that members of law enforcement presume they are guilty of a crime solely based on their race. Stop and frisk has been a topic of discussion for several years as it relates to racial profiling African American men. Stop and frisk is a law that was created in 1968 based on the Terry V. Ohio trial (Terry V. Ohio, 1986). The defendant, Mr. Terry, and two other gentlemen were stopped by an officer and weapons were seized. Mr. Terry tried to plea with the courts that the search and seizure of the weapons were unlawful. However, Mr. Terry was not successful with his plea. From that trial the stop and frisk law were created. Stop and frisk is a law that states, “police are given the ability to detain and frisk an individual for whom they have reasonable suspicion has been, is, or will be engaged in a criminal activity and may be armed and presently dangerous” (Kramer & Remster, 2018).

Some argue that this law disproportionately affects African American men. Indeed, for the last 2 years African American men have accounted for more than half of the individuals who have been stopped and frisked in New York (New York City Police

Department, 2020). In 2019, there were 12,179 stops; of those stops 8,315 were African American men (New York City Police Department, 2020). In 2018, there were 11,009 stopped, of those stops 6,611 were African American men (New York City Police Department, 2020). Nationally, African Americans experience stop and frisk at a greater rate then their white, Hispanic and individuals categorized as other counterparts (Davis et al. 2018). The percentages are White 8.6 %, Black 9.8%, Hispanic 7.6 %and Other 8.8% (Davis et al. 2018). The national statistics were not broken down by sex with each identified race.

Stop and Frisk has been known to cause emotional and psychological harm (Bandes et al., 2019). The emotional and psychological harm African American men describe include feelings of anger, agitation and confusion after being approached by a police officer (Aymer, 2019). According to Eterno (2017), many African American men exhibited feelings of anger, agitation and confusion because they were never provided with a reason for being stopped, or after being frisked the reason that was given made no sense to them, and was seen as unjustified, e.g. walking with a shirt off in an area where a crime was committed and the suspect was also not wearing a shirt. Some African American men describe the feelings they have as increased anxiety and anticipation of being stopped again (Aymer, 2019). Additionally, Bowleg et al. (2020) found that African American men tend to show more depressive symptoms after their encounter with a police officer than any other race. Lastly, Sewell et al. (2016) suggested that in addition to anxiety and depressive symptoms after African American men encounter police, they also expressed feeling more sadness, nervousness, hopelessness, and

worthlessness when living in an area in which African American men have a high probability of being stopped and frisked.

As it relates to the African American community and witnessing stop and frisks, individuals are fearful (Johnson, 2018). African Americans are fearful because a stop and frisk can result in someone being brutally beaten or even killed, and the thought then becomes, “that could have been me” (Johnson, 2018). This uncertainty of feeling that anyone can be stopped and frisked, beaten or killed is what contributes to the loss in trust of police (Novich & Hunt, 2018). Stop and frisk has been an ongoing issue for African American men, and it has led to police brutality, which will be discussed next.

Police Brutality

African American men and women are more likely to be subjected to excessive use of force by police than any other race (Ajilore & Shirey, 2017). According to Akinlabi (2020), police use of force is defined as the amount of force applied by police to an individual in order to get the person to comply with a request. Obasogie and Newman (2017) suggested that police violence towards African American men is a significant public health concern that needs to be addressed. In Chicago, police brutality extends to African American men being shot and tasered more than any other race (Ajilore & Shirey, 2017). In fact, there was a period of time in Chicago when more than 200 African American men were tortured by police officers to get confessions for crimes that many of them did not commit (Hamilton & Foote, 2018). These men were taken to wooded areas, beaten and threatened to the point that they thought if they did not confess to these alleged crimes, they would die. Many people knew of these actions and did nothing

(Hamilton & Foote, 2018). As a result of police brutality, many African American men face significant emotional trauma and anxiety (Obasogie & Newman, 2017), which may cause an individual to engage in risky health behaviors such as smoking and drinking alcohol (Dukes & Kahn, 2017). Dukes and Kahn (2017) found that if an individual continues to be subjected to such aggressive behaviors, they will find themselves at risk for hypertension and cardiovascular disease.

There have been ongoing discussions that police are not being trained on how to properly engage with minorities. Lynch (2018) stated police survivability is something that is engrained in an officer from the time they join the academy until they retire. Police survivability is simply another term for mobilizing the police through fear (Lynch, 2018). Members of law enforcement are constantly reminded how dangerous their jobs are by providing examples of different African American male civilian encounters with law enforcement that were negative as a means to have police fear African American men (Lynch, 2018). Through this fear, unnecessary measures are taken and many African American men are harmed. Officers are reminded daily of their own mortality (Lynch, 2018). Due to this constant reminder, many officers became prone to unchecked aggression and violence. A small municipal police department in California embraced this way of thinking and justified deadly force by awarding the highest merit badge to those who use it, viewing them as protectors. Unchecked aggression was justified by high ranking members of the police because the thought process is, "it is them or us," while also being reminded constantly, "You would rather be judged by 12 than carried by six" (lynch, 2018, p. 35). In other words, they believe that it is better to take the risk of taking

someone's life and going to court and defending yourself then possibly being killed. More specifically, police officers are groomed by their peers to believe that they have a right to act aggressively.

The Blue Lives Matter 'movement' is one of the most prominent public displays of police survivability in the United States (Lynch, 2018). Blue Lives Matter began as a media company on Facebook in 2014 after two officers were killed (Cooper, 2020). More importantly, this organization was formed after the Black Lives Matter movement was formed (Lynch, 2018). Members of the Blue Lives Matter 'movement' continue to speak negatively about the Black Lives Matter movement referring to them as a threat to law enforcement as well as stating they are antipolice. This thought process of police survivability is what makes many people in the African American community fearful for themselves and question the training that police officers attend.

Police Training and Community Policing Programs

African American men are racially profiled, beaten, and killed by police at a greater rate than any other race. One contributor to this state of affairs is that there is no nationally centralized training or assessment of cultural competency (Moon et al., 2018). Moon et al. (2018) suggested that police departments have begun to administer diversity training to officers. However, this training fails to focus on the intercultural development of the officer, which would help focus on specific challenges the officer could be faced with when met with cultural differences, and how to deal with them. In addition, implicit bias is dangerous for an officer because in many cases these negative bias attitudes are geared towards the African American community (Moon et al., 2018). Implicit bias then

leads to implicit stereotypes or assumptions e.g. African Americans commit more crimes then White people or African American men are aggressive (Moon et al., 2018). These implicit bias feelings are what cause African Americans, more specifically African American men, to be harmed (Moon et al., 2018).

According to Schlosser et al. (2015), every officer is expected to adhere to the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics, which states:

> The fundamental duties of an officer are to serve humankind; to safeguard lives and property; to protect the innocent against deception, the weak against oppression or intimidation, and the peaceful against violence and disorder; and to respect the constitutional rights of all people to liberty, equality, and justice (p. 117).

It appears that even with this code of ethics, certain members of law enforcement make the choice to ignore them, which is evident by the actions of many police across the United States.

In an effort to address the cultural competency issue that the state of Illinois is facing, Schlosser et al. (2015) is developing an educational program called the Policing in a Multicultural Society Program (PMSP), that is designed to assist police recruits in Illinois with being more culturally aware when responding to individuals in the African American community. PMSP is broken down into three, 3-hour modules. One of the following topics are discussed in each module: cultural awareness, sociohistorical knowledge, and tactical skills (Schlosser et al., 2015). It appears that attending this program had more of a positive impact on the new police recruits than the veteran

officers, suggesting that it is harder to change the outlook of someone who has had a set of beliefs for an extending period of time (Schlosser et al., 2015). Many veteran officers felt unheard; they felt the conversation was one sided; overall, they felt targeted.

Programs such as the PMSP could be beneficial across the country to help officers identify their bias, which could help address things like police brutality and create community policing programs. The idea behind community policing is community partnership and a better way of problem solving within the African American communities (Doane & Cumberland, 2018). Until police officers are culturally competent and more community policing programs are created, many African American communities will continue to have trust issues with police and will feel the need to have a conversation known as, the talk with their sons.

The Talk

The talk in the African American community refers to a conversation that African American parents have with their children, more specifically with their sons regarding how to interact with the police (Cintron et al., 2019). Parents are teaching their sons different strategies to use when they encounter police. The strategies instruct African American boys to never run down the street, always keep your hands down where they can be seen, and to never talk back to a police officer (Sotomayer, 2016). Different experiences are shared as a means to educate their young sons who will grow into men. Many parents feel that they have no choice but to have this conversation with their sons, believing that this talk will prevent their sons from being arrested, beaten or killed (Diaquoi, 2017). According to Diaquoi (2017) African American parents are

overwhelmed with sadness, fear, and anger that they have to have this form of discussion with their sons. Additionally, parents report being fearful the moment they find out they will be having a male child during pregnancy, anticipating the conversation that would have to take place in the future (Diaquoi, 2017).

According to Whitaker and Snell (2016), this talk plays a significant role in the African American male's identity. A child's parent(s) is (are) their sense of security e.g. the child's parent is the individual a child looks to for protection when faced with a challenge or something that produces fear (Whitaker & Snell, 2016). In a child's mind, their parent is the individual they look to for guidance on who they should be as well as demonstrate how they should be treated. Now, the person who is meant to be your protector is explaining that they cannot protect you. This child then begins to lose trust in his parents, not understand his worth and these feelings carry over into his adulthood. Although these talks are meant to be informative, it appears that for many African American men this talk creates fear and a negative attitude towards law enforcement and a loss of trust (Cintron et al., 2019). The relationship and level of trust with police and others African American boys have depends on the relationship they have with their parents at the time of this conversation (Citron et al., 2019). More specifically, if during this conversation the child has a good relationship with his parents, he has a better chance of understanding the limited control his parents have as it relates to his safety when he encounters a police officer. This same African American boy will have a better understanding of the importance of adhering to the strategies given to him during his encounter with police.

This talk has also been known to create anxiety, depressive symptoms and low self-esteem among African American men due to them feeling that they are unprotected, and a constant target based on their race and gender (Diaquoi, 2017). African American men who have had this conversation, and who have continued to experience racism from childhood through adulthood, experience anti-self-issues, internalized racism and self-hatred (Diaquoi, 2017). Miller et al. (2019) goes on to explain:

> Internalized racial oppression may be defined as, "the individual inculcation of the racist stereotyped, values, images, and ideologies perpetuated by the White dominant society about one's racial group, leading to feeling of self-doubt, disgust, and disrespect for one's race and/or oneself" (p. 1060).

In other words, a specific racial group, African Americans are spoken to in such a negative way, and treated so poorly by their white peers that they begin to hate themselves or their entire race because of this treatment. In addition, antiself can be described as hostility to their own sense of being Black (McIntosh et al., 2019); feeling as if there is a person inside you constantly feeding you negative thoughts of who you are. These feelings are overwhelming and for many African American men, in order to manage they must seek therapy (McIntosh et al., 2019). Another topic that seems to effect African American men is learned helplessness, which is learned through these talks and will be discussed next.

Learned Helplessness

Learned helplessness can be defined as a psychological response to a stressful experience that occurred repeatedly; the individual who is experiencing this believes they

are not capable or that they are unable to control the situation around them, so they no longer try to do so even if the opportunity became available (Nuvvula, 2016). For many African American men, learned helplessness is something that they experience daily. Feelings of learned helplessness come from events such as: being pulled over by police without any justification for the stop (Johnson, 2018), witnessing an officer kill a loved one and justice never being served with the officer being convicted (Staggers-Hakim, 2016), mass incarceration among African American men (Pettit & Gutierrez, n.d.), and being hyper-surveilled (Sewell et al., 2016). In a recent study conducted by Madubata et al. (2018), 172 African American adults, ranging from 18 to 35 years old comprised of male and female participants, suggested that depression is directly related to helplessness.

According to Smith Lee and Robinson (2019), African American men are exposed to police violence and police killings within their communities at an alarming rate, which has contributed to this sense of learned helplessness. learned helplessness is a form of trauma, which can affect someone directly or indirectly and be developed by:

> Witnessing a traumatic event, learning that a loved one has experienced a traumatic event, learning that a loved one died from a traumatic event that was violent or accidental in nature, or experiencing repeated or aversive details of a traumatic event through one's occupation. (p.147)

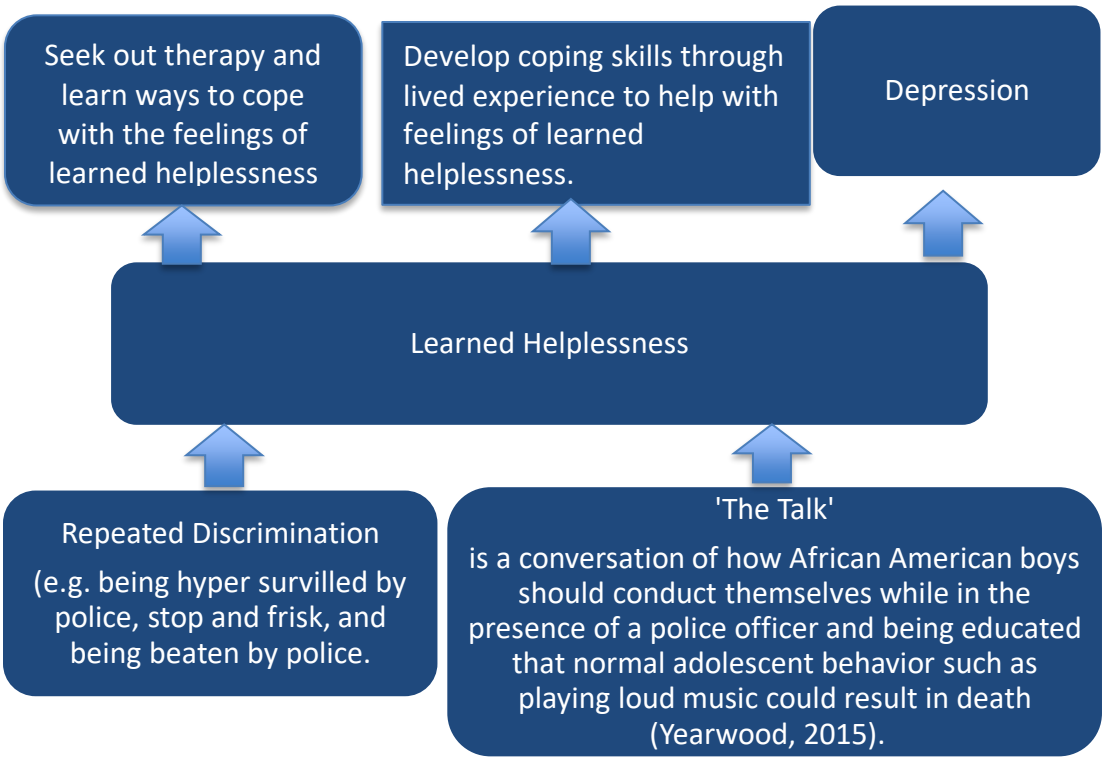
Being exposed to such trauma can produce psychological arousal, avoidance, and negative mood and cognition (Smith Lee & Robinson, 2019). If an individual experiences these traumas on a continuous basis, they may develop PTSD (Smith Lee & Robinson, 2019).

Learned helplessness is often something that many African American men see as children, in their parents. This sense of learned helplessness stems from African American parents' feeling that no matter what they do they cannot protect their sons from becoming a victim of unnecessary violence when police are involved (Jones, 2016). According to Jones (2016) learned helplessness for African American men is developed through fear and anger as children; being taught to fear the police in order to stay alive, while also seeing and hearing the anger in their parents as they look helplessly at them explaining that there is little to nothing they can do to protect them. Learned helplessness is also taught to African American men as children, through a conversation known as 'the talk' (Yearwood, 2015). 'The talk' is a conversation of how African American boys should conduct themselves while in the presence of a police officer and being educated that normal adolescent behavior such as playing loud music could result in death (Yearwood, 2015). Parents feel shameful and powerless along with fearful when having these conversations with their sons (Whitaker & Snell, 2016). As a result of constantly feeling fearful, many parents have this conversation regularly, reminding their sons of the harsh realities of a possible encounter with law enforcement, which makes the child being spoken to begin to feel helpless (Whitaker & Snell, 2016). Learned helplessness for African American men will be explained in Figure 2, cycle of learned helplessness. Learned helplessness is developed in two different ways, taught by a loved one or developed overtime due to repeated acts of discrimination. These two paths turn into learned helplessness, which presents itself as one of the following three paths; depression in some African American men (Whitaker & Snell, 2016), while other African American

men seek out therapeutic services to help them develop coping skills to manage their feelings of learned helplessness, and some develop coping skills through lived experience to help them cope with their feelings of learned helplessness (Jones, 2020).

Figure 2

Cycle of Learned Helplessness



Note. The reader should begin reading the figure from the bottom up.

Review of Research Methodology

For this study, the methodology that has been selected is phenomenology. This approach helps explore how an individual makes sense of their lived experience (Smith, 2017). According to Johnston et al. (2017) and the use of phenomenology they suggested, subjective experiences are unique to all participants. In understanding the negative personal experiences of African American men by police and their trust of police, it is evident that the loss of trust was developed as a result of their subjective experiences. The best approach for examining this would be through IPA. IPA is a qualitative approach that involves a detailed examination of an individuals lived experience while also exploring the individuals perception of the experience to establish a connection. (Smith, 2017). Additionally, PCT was selected as the theoretical base to guide this study, which supports IPA because this model focuses on the individual and their interactions within their own world (Fisher, 2017). More specifically, PCT focuses on the individual and the beliefs that they have due to their experiences (Kelly, 1991). These beliefs and feelings the individual have are then tested. If a similar incident occurs, with a different outcome, constructs change. Additionally, if the outcome is the same the individual's beliefs are strengthened.

When conducting research utilizing IPA pertaining to the negative personal experiences of African American men and their trust of police, there was only one study that was relatively close to this topic. Nordberg et al. (2018) Found that several African American college students, male and female, participated in this study. The participants were asked about their initial encounter with a police officer. The students provided

details of their encounter along with how they felt during and after their encounter with the officer. All the participants expressed a significant increase in discomfort and fear. Some of the participants reported feeling helpless as well. All participants reported a decline in trust. The African American men appeared to be more traumatized by their experiences than the female participants, fearing that they could have been killed if they would have spoken out of turn or simply moved the wrong way. The researchers using IPA allowed the participants to elaborate on their experience, sharing not only what happened but how the event made them feel during and after the encounter. This approach also allowed the participants to speak freely without the fear of being judged.

Summary and Conclusion

In conclusion, many view African American men as a threat; their size, the way they dress and the way they speak have for years given African American men the label as the angry Black man, which has posed as a threat to law enforcement (Quaye, 2017). This perceived threat is what has caused law enforcement to treat African American men negatively for years (Lynch, 2018), which has caused African American men not to trust police. For decades, this was a topic that would receive little to no acknowledgment, however, this has changed. With an increase in social media outlets bringing awareness to social injustice, and an executive order from President Obama being put in place to help begin building trust within African American communities (Mcmanus et al., 2019), over time things will get progressively better.

The existing literature shows that the negative personal experience of African American men by police significantly impacts their trust of police. The literature suggests

that police brutality and stop and frisk (Kwate & Threadcraft, 2018) continue to be a public health concern that plagues through the African American community, more specifically effecting African American men. Additional literature was reviewed on learned helplessness, which effects many African American men that are faced with repeated challenges with law enforcement (Jones, 2016), and the talk, which is a conversation that African American parents have with their sons to prepare them for future encounters with police (Moore et al., 2017). Lastly, the trust of police was discussed. This particular theme outlines the actions that were taken by police in order for the trust to be lost, as well as what the consequences are for law enforcement when the trust is gone. This study helps to fill the research gap by addressing how the negative personal experiences by police have negatively affected African American men. Additionally, it has provided details of what the impact looks like for African American men/community to lose trust in police. In the next chapter, I discuss the method used, the population sample, instrumentation, and the analysis that were used for the study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the negative personal experiences that some African American men have with police officers and how these experiences influenced their trust of law enforcement. When a poll was taken, 73% of African Americans, 67% of Hispanic Americans and 38% of European Americans reported believing police used excessive force is used and that the use of excessive force is increasing (Kochel, 2019). Based on this belief and a proven increase in the use of excessive force by police on African Americans, these people have expressed their anger and frustration as it relates to the current police practices in the United States (Mcmanus et al., 2019). Bowleg at al. (2020) suggested that within the African American community, African American males are more likely to be subjected to negative encounters than African American females. The encounters that African American men have experienced vary in severity and lethality, including racial profiling, stop and frisk, police harassment, arrests, hyper-policing, aggressive policing (e.g. yelling, cursing), and police brutality (e.g. chokeholds).

This study was guided by Kelly's PCT, and I used qualitative IPA as the methodology. In this chapter, I describe the research design and rationale for its use in this study. This chapter also includes discussions of the role of the researcher, selection of participants, data collection, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

Research Design and Rationale

The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore how the negative personal experiences of some African American men influence how they trust law enforcement. To explore this topic, the following two research questions were developed:

RQ1: What are African American men's personal experiences with police officers?

RQ2: What are African American men's experiences of trusting law enforcement?

Phenomenon of the Study

The phenomenon of the study was the negative personal experiences African American men had with police and their trust of law enforcement. My goal with this study was to obtain an in-depth understanding of the lived negative experiences of African American men with police and to share this information with the appropriate individuals in hopes that it will be used to facilitate social change.

Research Tradition

There are five main types of qualitative research that a researcher has to choose from: narrative, ethnography, grounded theory, case study, and phenomenology (Mohajan, 2018). The narrative, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study designs would not have been appropriate for this study.

Narrative research focuses on the participants' narrative about themselves and/or about events that may have occurred (Mohajan, 2018). I could have used this design for this study; however, narrative research looks to tell a story from beginning to end of a person's individual experience (see Mohajan, 2018). Data for this type of research are

collected by letters, interviews, photos, stories told by family members, conversations, journals, field notes, and other artifacts (Mohajan, 2018). This design would have been very lengthy and time consuming (see Butina, 2015).

Ethnography would not have been appropriate for this study because this design consists of studying and describing the beliefs, interactions, and behaviors among participants within social groups (see Mohajan, 2018). The focus of this study was on exploring the lived experiences of individual participants.

Grounded theory focuses on generating or discovering a new theory because the belief is that new theories can be developed based on observing the participants and collecting data (Mohajan, 2018). The goal of this study was not to develop a new theory; therefore, this design was not in alignment with the aims of this study. Lastly, the case study method is used to explore a group or individuals' life experiences in depth (Mohajan, 2018). This design would have been time-consuming and costly, so I did select it.

I used the phenomenological approach, specifically the IPA research tradition in this qualitative study (see Smith, 2017). IPA research is most concerned with the in-depth, lived experiences of each participant and how they make sense of their lived experience. Smith and Shinebourne (2012) stated that in order for something to become an experience, this event has to be important for the individual.

It is imperative that when researchers use the phenomenological approach, they are aware of any biases that they may have and that they address them accordingly so that they do not interfere with the study (Mohajan, 2018). Using this design, researchers not

only listen to the lived experiences of the participants, but they also interpret the meaning of the participants' lived experience without judgement (Abayomi, 2017). Smith and Osborn (2003) have described the double hermeneutic as the participant of a study trying their best to understand the experience they had, while the researcher is attempting to understand the participant while also trying to understand the experience the participant had.

As it relates to this study, IPA helped provide an enhanced meaning and understanding of the human lived experience (see Abayomi, 2017). Using IPA, I explored African American men's negative personal experiences with police and their trust of law enforcement. IPA aligned well with the purpose of this study, which was the rationale for selecting this approach.

Researchers use semistructured interviews with participants to gain a better understanding of their lived experiences (Smith, 2017). I used this style of interviewing in this study. When conducting the semistructured interviews, I asked open-ended questions in an attempt to have each participant provide in-depth responses. Smith (2017) suggested that semistructured interviews allow for the researcher to have flexibility during the interviewing process. This means the researcher is allowed to ask additional questions as they arise.

I placed focus on context analysis while also exploring the cause of the phenomena and making a point of highlighting the explanations from the participants regarding what happened (see Abayomi, 2017). Context analysis is a detailed investigation of a situation that helps explain what happened and the impact the situation

had. The importance of context analysis in this study was that it helped to determine what events led to the negative encounter with the police. It also provided a recounting of the actual encounter and how it impacted each participant's trust of law enforcement.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in a qualitative study using an IPA approach is to investigate and interpret the impact of the experience captured, which in this study, was the lived experiences of each participant (see Abayomi, 2017). I was the sole researcher in this study. As the sole researcher, I was responsible for recruiting all of the participants. All semistructured interviews were conducted by me, via FaceTime and Zoom, using open-ended questions (see Abayomi, 2017). It was my responsibility as the researcher to take the necessary precautions to avoid causing harm to any participants during this study (American Psychological Association, 2017). Collecting and analyzing the data was also my responsibility.

To avoid conflicts of interest, I did not have anyone participate in this study that I have or have had a professional or personal relationship with. During the recruiting process someone attempted to apply and there was a conflict of interest, so I explained to the individual that they were unable to participate in this study due to a conflict of interest.

When I began this research, I was aware of my own biases and how they could impact the study. I am an African American woman with an African American son, and we live in an urban neighborhood. As an African American mother of an African American boy, I fear for his safety every day. I was also given "the talk" as a child,

which contributed to my own biases towards police. I saw many African American men arrested for simply hanging out on the corner, but I never heard their stories, which led me to believe that the police were in the wrong. Growing up, seeing an African American man beaten by police was common; however, hearing the story behind the beating was uncommon. As the researcher, it was my responsibility to ensure that even with these beliefs and experiences, I did not allow them to influence how I selected participants, asked interview questions, analyzed the data, and presented findings. When selecting participants for the study, I did not select anyone that I knew. Knowing participants on a personal or professional level could have jeopardized the credibility of this study. Knowing a participant also means that I would have known their negative encounters with police, which was not my intention. When creating the interview questions, I imagined myself as the person reading the completed study. I created questions that I imagined the reader wanted to know the answer to, removing myself from the equation. When it was time to analyze the data and present the findings, everything was based on the facts and nothing else.

As it relates to preventing and managing bias, I journaled throughout the course of the study. When journaling, I acknowledged any biases that I had or may have developed during the research process. During this process, I held myself accountable, making sure that no interview questions were leading. My intention was to gain honest responses from all participants based on their lived experiences and not my expectation or preconceived notion of what should have happened. If I felt the need to step back throughout this process, I did, because I wanted to remain objective.

Methodology

Selection of Participants

When conducting an IPA, using a small homogenous sample size of five to 10 participants is recommended (Smith, 2004). This sample size is considered a sufficient number of participants because it allows the researcher to gather sufficient data about the participants and prevents the researcher from feeling overwhelmed (Smith & Shinbourne, 2012). For this study, I estimated that seven to 10 participants would be ideal to meet saturation. Saturation can be described as data being collected from participants until the information begins to show similar patterns (Guest et al., 2020). Saunders et al. (2017) explained that a researcher can determine if more data needs to be collected based on what they are hearing during the interview, prior to any form of coding. However, once the data are collected and the researcher feels that they have reached saturation, conducting an additional interview is recommended to ensure saturation is met.

Smith and Shinebourne (2012) suggested that when using IPA, participants should be selected purposively. Random sampling would not have been appropriate because the goal was to gain participants who had access to a certain perspective of the phenomenon that is being studied (see Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). Since the phenomenon was the negative personal experiences of African American men and their trust of police, the purposeful selection of participants was appropriate because it allowed the participants to share what their experiences were like.

Within any phenomenological study there are certain criteria that need to be met for the selection of participants. Participants should want to tell their story, and this

experience should not feel forced. For this study all participants were African American men. All participants were 18 years of age or older. All participants had negative personal experiences with the police, which have impacted their trust. I understood that having negative personal experiences with the police can cause some level of trauma. Therefore, additional criteria for participants were that they cannot currently be involved in trauma counseling services. If they are someone who has attended trauma counseling, all trauma counseling services had to have been completed 6 months prior to the interview. Trauma counseling is a very intense form of therapy. If a person has not completed trauma therapy, this can cause a setback in their treatment, causing psychological harm to the participant. Schock et al. (2016) explained that individuals who experience additional trauma within 6 months of the initial trauma risk an increase in anxiety and depressive symptoms. Furthermore, there are two reactions an individual can experience when the second trauma occurs, they are (Schock et al., 2016): reactivation/reactualization or retraumatization. Reactivation/reactualization is described as being less severe. The individual experiences a new traumatic event, has symptoms for a short period of time, and is able to recover on his or her own. Retraumatization is a significant increase in posttraumatic stress that is based on the following criteria: PTSD has to have developed after the individuals initial trauma; the second trauma has to be related to the first trauma; existing PTSD symptoms last longer. For this reason, potential participants who are undergoing trauma counseling will be excluded from the study, in order to minimize their risk.

There were multiple ways that participants were identified and recruited for this study. Flyers were created and placed in, hair salons, barber shops and religious establishments. Permission was given by the owner and or director/manager of each establishment before flyers were placed in any establishment. I also used the snowball strategy to gain participants for this study, which consisted of me recruiting participants and then asking those same participants if they knew anyone who they believed would be interested in participating in the study (Smith & Shinbourne, 2012). The snowball strategy allowed individuals who participated in the study to share with others what the study was about, which piqued their interest in wanting to participate (Abayomi, 2017). I also used social media e.g., Facebook and Instagram to gain participants.

My Walden email address and Google number were made available on the flyers for this study so that participants could contact me if they would like to participate. All participants were instructed to contact me via phone. Once in interested person contacted me by phone, verbally states that they would like to participate in the study, and provided their email address, I emailed the consent forms. Once all parties were clear on the expectations of the study and consents were signed, the dates were scheduled to interview the participants. When conducting the interviews, I was in my home office that is behind a locked door, with a silencer at the door so that while conversing nothing was heard outside of my office. The participants were encouraged to go to a private place e.g., library quiet room, bedroom or any place where no third parties would be present to ensure the participant's privacy.

Instrumentation

The methods in which data was collected for this study was through semi-structured interviews, via Zoom, Facetime, voice audio recorder and email for follow up questions that were asked and responses were needed. An interview guide was developed and presented to a qualitative expert panel at Walden University to check for consistency before any interviews were scheduled. After the initial interview, any follow up questions were asked via email. This option was outlined in the participant's consent form and the participant was asked to identify what their preference was, to be called for follow up questions or not be called. Semi structured interviews have been known to allow the researcher and the participant to engage in real-time dialogue, and if any additional questions or concerns were to arise semi-structured interviews provide the flexibility that is needed (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). During the interview it is important to ask open-ended, expansive questions, which would encourage the participants to want to open up and answer each question at length (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). The participants that were a part of this study had multiple levels of education, and because of this I made sure the questions were asked in a way that all participants are able to understand. With this in mind, all questions were written on a fifth grade level, which is the equivalent of an individual that is the age of 10 years old. Along with making sure the questions were worded in a way that the participants could understand them, it was also imperative that rapport was established. Establishing a rapport can be done by listening to what the participant is saying so that I know how I may need to phrase the next question, while also ensuring that the interview flows at a steady and calm pace (Smith & Shinebourne,

2012). For this study I used an interview protocol, and an audio tape-recorder. The questions that were asked during the interview with each participant are listed below, along with the research questions that they will attempt to answer.

In the research questions below, I attempted to explore how the negative personal experiences of some African American men influence how they trust law enforcement. To explore this topic, I presented two research questions:

Research Question 1: What are the personal experiences with police officers for African American males?

1. Can you tell me about your negative personal experience(s) with police?
2. During your encounter with the police, did you have any fears?

a. If yes, tell me about your fears?

3. How did you feel after your negative encounter with police?
4. What is the physical response your body has when you see a police officer?
5. What other negative encounters have you seen towards African American men by police?

a. How did these encounters make you feel?

6. How do you believe police view African American men?

Research Question 2: What is the experience of trusting law enforcement for African American males?

7. In your home, how were you told to behave if you ever encountered the police? How did this affect our level of trust with the police?

8. In your neighborhood, how were you told to behave if you ever encounter the police and how did this effect your level of trust with police?
9. How did you explain to your child(ren) how they should behave if they ever encounter the police, if you have children? How did this effect your level of trust with police?
10. How has your level of trust been affected by your negative personal encounter with police?
11. How has your level of trust affected how you teach your children to engage with police?
12. How has your level of trust affected how you discuss the police with family and friends?
13. How has your level of trust affected how you engage with police now?
14. Did you report the negative experience you had with the police officer(s)?
    a. If yes, what made you report it?
        i. What was your experience in reporting the encounter?
    b. If no, what made you not want to report it?
    c. How did reporting/not reporting the experience affect how you trust police?
15. How has your negative encounter with police affected your likelihood of reporting a crime that you witness?
16. How has your negative encounter with police affected your likelihood of reporting if you are a victim of a crime?

17. How has the unarmed killings of African American men affected your trust of police?
18. what family history exist with police?

Procedure for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

For this study, I was the sole researcher. I was responsible for recruiting all participants as well as collecting all the data for this study. In recruiting participants, I contacted local religious establishments, hair salons and barber shops. The institutional review board (IRB) approval was obtained from Walden University before any participants were recruited. Once IRB approval was established, it was important to gain the approval of each establishment's owner, manager and or director before posting any flyers outlining the study and my contact information.

Once a participant contacted me via phone or email and expressed interest in the study, and I confirmed that the individual met all the criteria for the study, a consent form was emailed to the participant. The consent form provided a brief description of the study, criteria that participants need to meet, background information on the study, an indication that the study is voluntary, an explanation of any procedures and risks, and lastly, an explanation of the different privacy protocols that have been put in place. The participants were required to reply to the original email stating, "I consent" before any interviews were scheduled. The participant's typing "I consent" will be used as an electronic signature for the purpose of this study.

Once a participant was selected, and all appropriate documentation was received, a date and time was scheduled for the participant and I to conduct the semi structured

interview. All interviews were conducted vie Zoom and Facetime. All interviews were recorded with an audio-recording device. During the interview I did not take any notes, as this could have been distracting to the participant as well as to me. It is important that I gave the participant my undivided attention to let them know that what they were saying was important. Rapport was established by asking questions such as: Where did you grow up? Do you have any children, if so, how many?

I did not transcribe the interviews myself. Instead, I used a transcribing company. I reviewed the transcript to ensure the accuracy of the transcription. I share this with the participants as well, so they had a full understanding that there was a second party looking at what was discussed but only for transcription purposes. I also explained to the participants that the transcriptionist has signed a confidentiality agreement and cannot share anything that she has transcribed.

During the interview, participants disclosed experiences that they had with police, which may have caused certain feelings and emotions to arise. It was important to have support in place in the event that any of the participants would have liked to speak with someone after the interview ended. I provided a list of counseling services to the participants that they could call if they would have liked to speak to someone to help process their feelings and emotions. These counseling services were free for the participants. At the end of each interview, I reiterated what the purpose of the study was and provided the participants with some time to ask questions.

Due to the semi structured interview, there was the possibility that there may be some follow-up questions. No follow-up questions were needed.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis is the process of gathering interview transcripts, notes and other materials in an effort to increase the understanding of the phenomenon in a study, which is vital in any study (Abayomi, 2017). Smith and Shinebourne (2012) stated that data analysis within IPA has several stages:

1. (Stage 1) Becoming Familiar with the data; during this phase the researchers typically familiarize themselves with the data by continuing to review the data once it has been transcribed and organized (Lester et al., 2020). The idea behind this is that each time the researcher reads over the data it may provide new information (Smith & Shineborurne, 2012). During this stage, it is also recommended that while reviewing the data researchers should document their initial reflections and initial interpretations of the data.
2. (Stage 2) Coding the data; selecting short descriptive words or phrases that would assign significant meaning to the data. Smith and Shinebourne (2012) stated during this stage the researcher may use metaphors and figures of speech. It has also been suggested that the researcher should pay close attention to certain emotional and distinct phrases that are used.
3. (Stage 3) Moving from codes to themes; the researcher creates short descriptive words or phrases that had a significant meaning and now those phrases and words will be developed into themes. These short descriptive words and phrases help identify the phenomenon (Smith & Sinebourne, 2012).

4. (Stage 4) This stage would consist of finding a connection between the emerging themes. This would consist of taking the emerging themes and clustering them together. The researcher should write down a description of what the participant experienced with the said phenomenon. Under each description the researcher is then going to write how the experience happened (Smith & Sinebourne, 2012).
5. (Stage 5) Making the analytic process transparent; making sure that the reader is able to understand the material. The researcher is responsible for writing a detailed paragraph, which outlines the participants experience and how they experienced the phenomenon (Smith & Sinebourne, 2012).

Issues of Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of this research was the sole responsibility of the researcher. Trustworthiness is based on the confidence and quality in the data (Connelly, 2016). Connelly (2016) explains that when trying to establish trustworthiness within a study there are specific criteria that needs to be met, they are: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. Each of these four criteria will be outlined.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the truth or can be considered the confidence of a study and the overall findings of that study (Connelly, 2016). To ensure credibility, I planned to utilize member checks; having each participant review a summarized version of the interview that they will have-with me, providing feedback to confirm that the summarized version of the transcript from their interview describes their experience. The summarized

version of the interview was emailed to the participant. Doing this provides an additional layer of accuracy and credibility to the study.

Prolonged engagement and reflexivity were also used to ensure credibility. In regard to prolonged engagement, it is important to spend enough time with each participant so that as the researcher I had a firm understanding of the phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lastly, with regard to reflexivity, it is important to take detailed notes throughout this process. I intended to journal, taking notes after each interview and during all meetings with my committee members.

Transferability

Transferability is to the extent to which the specific findings from a study can be useful in different settings and situations (Connelly, 2016). In order for transferability to be achieved detail descriptions or thick description of the data must be available for the reader/ audience so that they can make comparisons to other context, which would be based on as much information as possible (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As the researcher, I planned to apply thick description by providing an in-depth account of the phenomenon, and to then allow the reader to make their own comparison (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability

Dependability refers to showing that the findings of a study are consistent and that these findings can be repeated in further research (Amankwaa, 2016). To achieve dependability a strategy that I used for this study is taking detailed notes after every interview. I planned to record every interview with an audio recorder. Other ways to achieve dependability would be to maintain an audit trail (Amankwaa, 2016). Audit trails

consist of taking notes from the beginning to the end of the research process as well as keeping the interview transcripts for transparency (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Throughout this research process the members of my committee provided me with in-depth feedback to ensure that my study is meeting the dependability criteria.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the results of a study that can be reviewed and confirmed by another researcher as being verifiable (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To achieve confirmability, strategies that can be used are audit trail and member checking. As mentioned previously, the audit trail consisted of the notes that have been taken throughout the research process as well as interview transcripts and findings. In addition, the current chapter and any published reports will include sufficient detail about the methodology of the study to allow it to be replicated for confirmation.

Ravitch and Carl (2016) also suggested using reflexivity as a means to acknowledge and explore the researcher's biases and prejudices without allowing those said biases and prejudices to have an impact on the results of the study. I planned to take notes throughout the entire research process. I planned to write detailed notes after each interview, during meetings with committee members, and while reading literature. The smallest of details are important when conducting research. As previously mentioned, I used an audio recorder to record the interviews throughout this study.

Ethical Procedures

The researcher must request approval from the IRB before participants are recruited or data collected. Therefore, before moving forward with any recruitment or

data collection, I requested approval from Walden University's IRB. Walden University's IRB's sole responsibility is to ensure that the research conducted that is associated with this institution complies with the ethical standards of the university, while also complying with the united states federal guidelines, and ensuring no undue harm will come upon any of the participants in a study.

Before any of the interviews began, I was sure to sure to explain confidentiality in detail and what that means for the participants. Making sure that the participants understood that if at any time they stated they wanted to harm themselves or others I would have to break confidentiality and report this to the appropriate authorities. In addition, I also explained to the participants that I am a mandated reporter, which means that I have a legal and ethical obligation to report any confirmed or suspected abuse of a minor, elderly person or someone who is intellectually challenged.

For this study, I explored the negative personal experience of African American men by police and their trust of law enforcement. I focused more on the lived experience of the participant. I understand that there is always the possibility of a participant's emotions being triggered e.g asking a certain question not knowing it may cause the participant to react in a certain way. If this occurred, I stopped the interview. It was important that I checked in with the participant, as I do not want to cause any additional psychological trauma, which is why I have created a list of free counseling services that will be distributed to each participant on the consent form.

There was also the likelihood that while conducting the interview a participant may become angry. If would have happened, as previously mentioned it would have been

important that I checked in with the participant and if the participants anger began to escalate, I planned to discontinue the interview immediately. The psychological and emotional state of the participants were important to me and I was not willing to jeopardize a participant's psychological and or emotional stability for the sake of this study. I checked in with the participants before ending our video call to make sure that they have the counseling resources that they need.

Participants had the ability to decide that they no longer wanted to participate in the study. If this was to occur, I would have explained to the participant that their participation in the study was voluntary and if they wanted to withdraw from the study, they are free to make that choice. I would have been sure to document this in my notes to refer back to later. With every participant who drops out of the study I would find a replacement.

To protect the identity and confidentiality of each participant that was a part of this study, I used letters to identify each participant. The participants true identity was not disclosed to any third parties. All interviews were recorded on an audio recorder. No recordings were logged with the participant's names. All recordings and transcripts were stored on an external hard drive and placed in a fire lock box that was secured in my home office space for 5 years. The keys to this lock box were kept in a small combination safe, which I am the only person who has this combination. At the end of the 5-year period, I will destroy all of the data myself. The transcriber will be required to discard all recordings after they are transcribed per contractual agreement and store each transcript

under an encrypted file for 6 months, which only the transcriber will have access to. Once the 6-month period is complete the transcriptionist will discard all transcripts.

Summary

This study used IPA to quantitatively explore the negative personal experience of African American men by police and their trust of law enforcement. Using IPA allowed me to gain a better understanding of the African American male experience. Throughout this chapter many points were discussed. Different sampling techniques were discussed along with specific criteria that needs to be met for each participant in order for them to be a part of this study; some criteria being: African American males, 18 years of age or older, and so forth. For this study, a small homogenous sample size of 10 participants were used at which point saturation was met, as well as the snowball sampling technique. The research tradition that was appropriate for the study, which is phenomenology, more specifically IPA, and the rationale for selecting this specific research tradition were discussed. Next, the role of the researcher will be recruiting participants, and ensuring that no undue harm is directed towards the participants. Additionally, the role of the researcher is to acknowledge any bias and to create a plan so that those bias do not interfere with my ability to conduct interviews, analyze data and present any findings. Next, the criteria for the selection of participants to help identify a specific group that could participate in the study, as well as the detailed outline of what the consent form would look like was highlighted. Data collection, which consists of semi structured interviews that will be transcribed by a transcriptionist were discussed at length. Trustworthiness and the many techniques that were used during this study, such as:

credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were discussed. Lastly, ethical considerations such as: understanding the IRB process at length, explaining confidentiality and what that means for the participant, being a mandated reporter, checking in with the client if they become angry and discontinuing the interview, and acknowledging that the participants have the right to decide that they no longer want to participate were discussed.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this IPA study was to explore the negative personal experiences that some African American men have with police officers and how these experiences influenced their trust of law enforcement. This study was guided by Kelly's PCT. The following two research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are African American men's personal experiences with police officers?

RQ2: What African American men's experiences of trusting law enforcement?

For this study, I used a qualitative phenomenological research design to collect data, which was done through asking participant semi structured, open-ended interview questions. All the questions asked were aimed at eliciting conversations, providing a space for each participant to share their individual experiences and express their feelings of the phenomenon as they recall it.

In Chapter 4, I discuss the settings in which the study took place, participant demographics, how data were collected, and data analysis procedures. Additionally, the trustworthiness of the study and the results of the study are provided. I conclude with a complete review of the information presented in the chapter.

Setting

I obtained data for this study through in-depth, semi structured interviews with African American men that were recruited through flyers that were placed in barbershops and hair salons as well as posted on Instagram and Facebook, while also using snowball sampling. I conducted interviews with participants via FaceTime and Zoom, and the

interviews lasted between 25 and 75 minutes. All participants were provided time to ask any additional questions that they may have had at the end of the interview. Each participant was asked the same interview questions.

There were 10 African American men who took part in the study. As each participant responded to the flyer and was deemed to fit the criteria of the study, I emailed them a consent form. Once the participants reviewed the form and typed, "I consent" into an email that they sent back to me, I called the participant and scheduled a date and time to meet on either Microsoft Teams, FaceTime, Zoom, or Skype. Zoom and Facetime were the only methods of meeting selected by the participants. No face-to-face interviews were conducted due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Eight interviews were conducted via Zoom and two interviews were conducted via FaceTime. All participants were encouraged to be in a place that they felt safe and comfortable to speak with me for the meetings; however, the location of each participant at the time of the meeting was left up to them. During each interview, I was in my home office with the door closed and a silencer placed on the door so that no one in my home was able to hear the conversation taking place. There were no unnecessary personal or organizational conditions that influenced or affected the participants during the interviews.

Demographics

Ten African American men who had a negative personal experience with police and had their trust of police affected by this experience participated in this study. Each participant met the inclusion criteria for this study. At the time of the interviews, the participants for this study resided in the following states: Pennsylvania, North Carolina,

South Carolina, and Virginia. The age range of the participants was from 29 to 51 years old, with the average age being 42.6 years old. To ensure each participant's identity was not disclosed and to maintain confidentiality, I assigned and referred to all participants by a letter (i.e., Participant A, Participant B, Participant C, etc.).

Data Collection

Data collection began once I received final approval from Walden University IRB (Approval No. 09-29-20-0500415) on September 29, 2020. Recruitment flyers were placed in barbershops, hair salons, and Walden University's Participant Pool as well as posted on Instagram and Facebook. Snowball sampling was also used to recruit participants. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, I was unable to place any flyers in libraries due to them being closed. Walden University's Participant Pool was used instead. Individuals who wanted to participate in the study contacted me via telephone or email after reviewing the flyer that highlighted the purpose of the study. During my initial conversation with each potential participant, I assessed them to ensure they met all the inclusion criteria of being an African American man who is 18 years of age or older that had a negative personal experience with police that impacted their trust of police. Lastly, I ensured that participants were not currently in trauma therapy or if they attended trauma therapy, that the last session was 6 months prior to their participation in the study. When it was confirmed that the criteria were met, each participant was sent a consent form to review and send back to me via email with the words "I consent" typed into the email. Once I received the completed consent form, I scheduled a date and time to meet with each participant. Due to the use of snowball sampling, I asked each participant to share

my flyer and contact information with other African American men who they believed would meet the criteria to be a part of the study. I began interviews on October 1, 2020 and continued conducting interviews until November 11, 2020. At the end of each interview, I reminded each participant of the list of free local and national counseling services that they could call if they began to feel distressed after the interview.

I conducted semi structured interviews with a total of 10 African American male participants for this study. The interviews were scheduled for 45 to 65 minutes; however, they ended up lasting between 25 and 75 minutes. During the 6-week data collection process; two participants were interviewed the first week, two participants were interviewed the second week, no participants were interviewed the third week, two participants were interviewed the fourth week, one participant was interviewed Week 5, and three participants were interviewed Week 6.

When conducting the interviews, I was in my home office. All the participants were encouraged to go to a place where they felt comfortable and would have privacy. However, the choice of where they wanted to be during the interview was left up to them. All interviews were recorded on an Olympus digital voice recorder, which all participants consented to. Once each interview was complete, I uploaded the digital audio recording to my external hard drive, which is password protected. I then forwarded the voice recording to the transcriptionist for the recording to be transcribed. Each email that was sent to the transcriptionist was encrypted. All recordings and transcripts are stored on an external hard drive and placed in a fire-proof lock box that is secured in my home office space. The keys to this lock box are kept in a small combination safe; I am the only

person who has the combination to the safe. Upon receipt of each transcript from the transcriptionist, I read them and also listened to the recording to make sure there were no errors.

After reading over each transcript, I conducted member checks by emailing each participant a copy of their transcript to check it for accuracy. Feedback was only provided by two participants. Several attempts were made to contact the eight other participants; however, I did not hear from them.

Data Analysis

I proceeded with the data analysis process by using IPA. This type of research is most concerned with the in-depth lived experience of each participant and how they make sense of their lived experience (Smith, 2017). Using short, descriptive words and phrases, I coded the data while also using emotional and distinct phrases (see Smith & Shinbourne, 2012). With these short, descriptive words and phrases, I was able to identify three themes and 11 subthemes (see Table 1). No software was used when coding or creating themes and subthemes due to my limited knowledge on the suggested software programs. Instead, I used a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and several different colors to highlight data throughout the spreadsheet.

Although I used a transcriptionist, I wanted to make sure I submerged myself in the data. I did this by reading each transcript several times on my computer and listening to each recording several times. Doing this allowed me to find small errors in the transcript. There were times the transcriber could not understand what a participant said. When I saw this discrepancy, which was indicated by the transcriber putting "???" in the

text, I listened very carefully and entered what I heard, also based on what I remembered from the interviews. My observation of each participant was important; therefore, I documented the participant's body language, tone of voice, breaks that were taken, and how forthcoming they were when responding to the questions. The next step in IPA that I adhered to was finding a connection between the emerging themes. In order to do this, I took the emerging themes and clustered them together (see Smith & Shinebourne, 2012).

Several themes and subthemes emerged from the data analysis process. There were three main themes: encounter with police, helplessness, and what trust looks like with police. From these three main themes, I generated 11 subthemes comparable to the participants' lived experiences (see Table 1).

Table 1

Themes and Subthemes

Encounter with the police	Helplessness	What trust looks like with police
Feeling like they were treated unfairly and targeted by the police based off of their race and accused of things they did not do	Feeling the need to Comply when police are wrong	Avoiding police contact by not speaking to them and keeping their distance due to past encounters.
Being beaten by the police when they "ain't even do nothing" and left to feel helpless	Feeling rights were violated and there is nothing they could do about it	Not reporting witnessed crime
Guns drawn and pointed at them and feeling they would die	Watching African American men encounter police and not able to do anything	Teaching their children how to verbally and physically engage with police in order to stay safe.
		No trust

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

As the researcher, I planned the research, screened each participant to ensure they were eligible to participate in the study, interviewed each participant, analyzed the data, and presented the findings. To ensure credibility, member checking, prolonged engagement, and reflexivity were used. I used member checking as a tool to gain feedback from the participants to help me see if their experience was accurately described. Once each interview was complete, the audio recording was sent to the transcriber. Once the transcripts were complete and sent back to me, I emailed a summary of the interview to the participant so they could review them and notify me of any errors or if their experience was captured correctly. In terms of prolonged engagement, I spent time establishing rapport with each participant, ensuring that I spent enough time with each participant to gain a firm understanding of the phenomenon from their point of view. Lastly, reflexive journaling was used to help me keep track of things, such as each participant's body language and key words and phrases used as well as my own personal thoughts during this process, and reflect on how overwhelming it had to be to be charged for crimes the participants did not commit and/or see other African American men have negative encounters with police and feel like they just had to watch and could do nothing.

Transferability

In order to achieve transferability, Connelly (2016) stated that the findings from a study should be able to be used in different settings and situations. If another researcher wanted to replicate this study, they should be able to use similar settings and participants.

I used thick description in this study as a means to enhance transferability. Thick description was used in the form of providing direct quotes from the participants, allowing the participants to read them, and make their own comparison (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability

Dependability refers to demonstrating that the findings from a particular study are consistent and that these same findings can be repeated in further research (Amankwaa, 2016). Dependability was achieved by recording each interview so that each participant's words would be captured verbatim. It was also important to take notes as well as an audit trail of each interview transcript in order to heighten dependability (Smith et al., 2012). Members of my research committee assisted me throughout this dissertation journey. When I asked members of my committee questions feedback was provided by means of support and guidance.

Confirmability

According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), confirmability is achieved when the results of a study can be reviewed and confirmed by another researcher as being verifiable. Member checking, reflexivity, and audit trail were used to achieve confirmability for this study. The filed notes and transcripts produced from each interview are indicant of my audit trail. Participants were emailed a summary of their interview to review for accuracy and to provide feedback if they chose to. Lastly, when using reflexivity, I wrote detailed notes after each interview with a participant and after each conversation with members of my research committee.

Results

The purpose of this IPA study was to explore the negative personal experiences that some African American men have with police officers, and their experiences of trust of law enforcement. Data were collected from 10 African American men who I interviewed using semi structured open questions.

Theme 1: Encounter with police.

The theme of encounter with police emerged amongst all participants. There were three sub themes that that were identified: feeling like they were treated unfairly and targeted by the police based off of their race and accused of things they did not do, being beaten by the police and "ain't even do anything" and left to feel helpless, and lastly, guns drawn and pointed at them and feeling they would die. Participants in the study felt targeted, helpless and as if they would die as a result of their encounter with the police.

Sub-theme 1.1: Feeling like they were treated unfairly and targeted by the police based off of their race and accused of things they did not do

All 10 participants expressed that they felt they were treated unfairly, targeted by police based on their race, and accused of things they did not do. Participant A stated,

> "when I was 12, I remember being at a…uuh…we were washing clothes, me and my dad. And the police came in. They were speaking with someone outside. I was pretty tall for a kid, so I guess they assumed I was an adult. And they came in with their guns drawn, to my face, telling me to get down. And my dad kept saying that I was only a kid, but...you know

> they didn't care. They slammed me on the ground…put their knees in my back. All because they thought I was a robber or something like that."

Participant B stated,

> "I'm roughly 26 or 7 at the time, and me and my brother were stopped on the street of our own neighborhood. Oh, they were like, "there were a lot of burglaries in the neighborhood, we wanna make sure you're ok." We weren't even driving; we were just walking down the street. Burglaries…like...man, we are a half a block from our house. I remember seeing you in this neighborhood. I'm in this neighborhood every day. And first of all, what burglaries, it's all old people and students. That's all who live here…nobody's breaking into anything…".

Participant C stated,

> "they basically said we fit the description of some guys who uum…I guess…attacked or assaulted these, I guess these girls that pulled up to the park earlier. They said, "You guys just fit the description, we got a call that there were some people in the park, and you fit the description of some people that assaulted or messed with these girls." So…I'm like still baffled, I'm like, "man I never seen these girls in my life. I don't even stay in Kernersville. What do you mean fit the description? Cause I'm black? What kind of description, sir?" They were like, you just fit the description and basically we're gonna let them come back and see if you guys were who they thought you were".

Participant D stated,

> "And as I was exiting my vehicle, he had his gun to my face, and said, "Don't move!" And, I'm like, "What?" Turn your vehicle off, don't move. Couple of seconds…he turned his head, and his partner yelled at him and said, "Wrong person, wrong person, get back in the car." And they sped off".

Sub-theme 1.2: Being beaten by the police and "ain't even do nothing" and left to feel helpless

Four of the 10 participants of the current study experienced being physically assaulted by police, which left them feeling helpless. Participant A stated, "They slammed me on the ground…put their knees in my back." Participant D shared his experience by stating,

> "My experience with police when I was a teenager, it was like what they said that was it. You didn't have a say so. They took me home, they roughed me up, and then that was it. And then they would tell their side of it, and now you got your parents looking at you sideways, and it wasn't even that way it happened".

Participant E stated,

> "So I was going to the store, and the cops jumped out on me as they were jumping out on somebody else. And uum…I guess they like associated me with the crowd that was in the car. So, I was like thrown on the ground,

> stomped in the chest, gun put in my face, told me shut the "F" up, you know, all that kind of stuff. I ain't even do nothing".

Participant G stated, "They wouldn't even say nothing they would just jump out the car and start beating us. What could we do about it? We couldn't do anything about it."

Sub-theme 1.3: Guns drawn and pointed at them and feeling they would die

Six of the 10 participants experienced a gun being drawn on them during their encounter with the police, which left them feeling as if they would be killed. Participant A stated, "And they came in with their guns drawn, to my face. I thought that myself and my dad were gonna lose our lives that day." Participant D stated, "he jumped out, and he ran around the vehicle from the passenger side around the back, to the front, and approached my vehicle with his gun out. I thought I was going to die." Participant E stated,

> "gun put in my face, told me shut the "F" up, you know, all that kind of stuff. I feared that this guy was gonna do…do whatever he wanted to me and I had no way to like let people that care for me and love me know".

Participant F stated, "she held me at gunpoint in front of the nightclub. I felt as though her…in her [pause] her current state she could easily shoot and kill me, you know". Participant G described his experience by stating,

> "When I get pulled over by the Philly police department, I had the one on the side on my door with his gun…hand on his gun, ready to shoot me. And his partner had one…who had his gun out on the passenger side,

> looking in my window. So, I can't even…I'm afraid to take my seatbelt off. I'm afraid to move so usually before they get to the car, I put my keys on the dashboard and my info in my hands are out the window. So y'all have no reason to shoot me. They're vicious. Like if you move too quick, I'm not trying to die that quick".

Lastly, Participant J described his encounter by stating, "They said y'all need to stop cuz y'all look like a gang. And they proceeded to pull their guns out for no reason…so they…pointed at all of us. I actually thought I was gone get killed that day".

Theme 2: Helplessness.

The second theme emerged when the participants discussed their lived experience and how during their encounter, they felt unable to defend themselves or others. The participants' feeling of helplessness were examined under the following three subthemes: Feels the need to comply when police are wrong, feels rights were violated and there is nothing they could do about it, and watched African American men encounter police and not be able to do anything.

Sub-theme 2.1: Feels the need to comply when the police are wrong

All the participants that were interviewed for this study felt that at some point during their encounter with the police they had to comply even though they believed the police were in the wrong. Participant A made a statement describing a police officer asking for his ID with no cause by saying, " they asked for the ID, I gave them the ID. Even if you feel you were in the right, still…just, you know, to get out of the situation." Participant B stated, "pump their ego up as MUCH as you can. Make it seem like they're

the boss, and you're just a dumb citizen who has to pay the $200 damn ticket and drive away with your life even though I didn't do anything."

Participant C described his encounter by stating, "We were like, "Hold up man, what's going on here? Basically, they were like, don't ask questions, being very authoritative. Then they came back and started questioning me. They proceed to search me and everything…". Participant D explained how false charges were filed on him, went to court and the charge was upheld even though the officer was wrong,

> "I had a cop lie in the law…I had a cop lie in court, and the judge knew he was lying…and caught him in a lie. But he reprimanded him in front of the court…but I still got a misdemeanor one because he's a law enforcement officer, and I shouldn't have disrespected him. I should have did everything he said to do. But if he's wrong and you know he's wrong come on now?"

Participant D went on to say, "So, I don't trust them. I feel like they all lie. This situation ruined a part of my life."

Sub-theme 2.2: Feels rights were violated and there is nothing they could do about it

Several of the participants felt that during their encounter with the police their rights were violated and there was nothing that they could do about it. Participant B's encounter happened while with his brother and he states,

> "And my brother was just like stating his rights. You know, but they don't care. Because really, those might be the rights in the letter of the law, but

> once they stop you, they more or less can do whatever they want."

Participant C described how he felt during his encounter by saying,

> "I guess just being convinced and saying ok…that's just how the police treat you. You know it didn't stay with me long, but it was just…something that you know…something wasn't right about that man. They didn't have the right to do that. It seemed like they…I don't know… violated my personal rights, my universal rights."

Participant F describes how he felt by saying,

> "So like I'm sitting there trying to explain to people how I was detained, and my rights violated for the reason that my own car was stolen, the car that most of my co-workers have driven in it with me, you know. I was pissed but what could I do."

Participant H describes his encounter and how he felt his rights were violated by stating,

> "They took me by patty wagon, to the 15th. They didn't book me but what they did was they detained me for, I believe it was 7 in a half hours. At the end of the seven in a half hours all I got was, "I apologize for the detainment, I apologize for any inconvenience", and they sent me home".

Participant J describes how he felt after being pulled over, "I just felt violated. I didn't do anything. I felt really violated and angry about it."

Sub-theme 2.3: Watched African American men encounter police and not able to do anything

All the participants in this study described witnessing African American men having negative encounters with the police and feeling as if they were unable to do assist them. Participant A describes how he felt after witnessing a negative encounter as,

> "Me, being the person I am, I always wanna help. But at this day and age you can't help. It's like, if you go to help, then the attention might get turned on you, and you might end up in a bad spot trying to help. So, I mean, intentionally I wanted to help, but I couldn't."

Participant B described how he felt after witnessing and African American man being pulled over by saying, "the cops are stopping somebody. I'm like oh, oh that's [name?]. I gotta be…I gotta act like I don't exist. I don't exist, you know. But the cops are stopping him." Participant J describes how he felt when witnessing an encounter with police and an African American man by saying, "he had a cell phone that was big, I thought it might look like a taser, whatever the case may be, I thought they might abuse him. I thought they might kill him. All I could do was watch."

Theme 3: What trust looks like with the police.

The third theme emerged as the participants discussed their lived experience, and as a result of their experience, four sub-themes evolved describing what their trust now looks like with police. These sub-themes are: Avoid police contact by not speaking to them and keeping their distance due to past encounters, Not reporting witnessed crime, teaching their children how to verbally and physically engage with police in order to stay safe, and No trust.

Sub-theme 3.1: Avoid police contact by not speaking to them and keeping

their distance due to past encounters

All of the participants of the study shared that they avoid police contact by not speaking to them and keeping their distance due to past encounters. Participant G expresses his feelings by saying, “I ain’t got no rap for them. If they ask me a question, it’s direct. I ain’t giving them no more information than what they ask for. And I love to talk but I ain’t got no rap.” Participant B shared his feeling by saying,

> “So, at this point…I just…it’s (pause) just for my own safety, I have to view the cops as legal terrorists, I stay the hell away from them. I don’t talk to them. I just stay the hell away from them”. Participant H stated, “I don’t even engage with them. I don’t. And I’m kind of like the happy go lucky guy and I speak to everybody. But as far as them, I used to be like yo, you guys have a safe tour, and now I don’t.”

Sub-theme 3.2: Not reporting witnessed crime

Six of the 10 participants expressed they would not report a witnessed crime, which is a result of their past negative encounter. Participant B shared his feelings of reporting witnessed crime by saying,

> “I am unlikely to actually report a crime unless it affected me personally. Uum…if someone busts into the house, or like somebody like hits me or does something to me I’m absolutely gonna report that. But if I see something go down, I don’t know what happened there. You know, I don’t know what…I don’t know what or why”.

Participant F shared, “I’m not calling them” when asked if he would report a witnessed crime. Participant G states,

> “I mind my business. If it’s something with my family I handle it myself. We had a shooting on my block last year, and they had the balls to ask me to get some of my cameras. I had erased it. I mind my business”,

suggesting he would rather take matters into his own hand instead of involving the police. Participant C explains,

> “I’m not gonna, like I said, I’m not gonna escalate a situation I deem just…it could be a law breaking but it’s not something to get the police involved. It’s something you can probably just, you know, hash out among yourselves or among whoever has the problem with it”.

Sub-theme 3.3: Teaching their children how to verbally and physically engage with police in order to stay safe

Nine of the 10 participants explained how they have conversations with their children on how they should verbally and physically engage with police in order to stay safe. Participant D shared the conversation he had with his children and stated.

> “Well, I mean…as far as the same sentiment…I explained to them, you know, if you’re dealing with the police you want to answer the questions, you wanna keep a certain tone. You definitely want to understand, you know, I try to, as much…understand…as far as just…your rights, you wanna definitely make sure you’re asking the right questions. Because you know…a lot of times asking questions that are unnecessary can lead to

> further escalation and assault that's not necessary. So, I just teach them, if you ever get in a situation where you're dealing with the police answer the questions, yes or no answers. You know, if you do have a question ask, "Am I free to leave?" You know, get to the point. Let them know what your take is and try to keep a respectful tone and attitude, because in most cases, that is going to determine how the encounter goes."

Participant A stated he told his daughter, "if you get pulled over, do as they say, you know? The more you…you know, the more you don't want to participate with them, the angrier they are going to get." Participant D shared when speaking to his sons he said,

> "Uuh…I taught…I taught my kids to uum…if they get pulled over…cause they all drive, turn your vehicles off, roll your windows down, keep your hands on the steering wheel. Don't move until they ask you to move or tell you to move. Plain and simple…just always look at their…get their badge number first. That's all you gotta remember and that's it".

Sub-theme 3.3: No trust

During the interviewing process, all ten participants expressed no trust for the police. Participant F shared, "I don't' trust police because a lot of them won't call other police officers out on their BS". Participant E expressed his feelings by stating, "I don't trust them….at all." Participant G described his feelings of trust by saying, "I don't trust them. I trust them like I trust anybody on the street." Lastly, Participant J shared his thoughts on trusting the police by saying, "I do not trust the police because I feel as

though they don't have proper community training for one. They don't have sensitivity training. They definitely have an overseer type mentality."

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the negative personal experiences that some African American men have with police officers, and their experience of trust of law enforcement. The data collection that was used was interviews with each participant. The experiences that were described in the themes and subthemes were from Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Virginia, and South Carolina African American male participants, which were obtained by using semi structured interviews using Zoom and FaceTime. During the interview three main themes and 11 sub themes emerged from the experiences of the participants to answer the research questions. The main themes were encounter with the police, helplessness, and what trust looks like with the police. In Chapter 5, an interpretation of the findings will be provided, the limitation of the study will be discussed, recommendations going forward and the implication for positive social change will be provided.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and recommendation

For this study, I used IPA to explore the negative personal experiences that some African American men have with police officers and the influence these experiences have on their trust of law enforcement. There have been previous studies that focused on African American men's negative personal experiences with police to identify how their individualized experiences have impacted their trust in law enforcement (Smith Lee & Robinson, 2019). However, these studies are limited. IPA was the most appropriate qualitative approach because it allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' lived experiences.

I was able to identify three themes and 11 subthemes from my analysis of the interview data. The three themes that emerged were encounters with the police, helplessness, and what trust looks like with the police. Examining the participants' perceptions of their encounters with police allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of the many challenges that African American men face daily and how their lives have changed because of these encounters. These specific encounters caused feelings of helplessness, such as feeling that their rights were violated and feeling as though there was nothing they could do about witnessing other African American men who were having negative encounters with police. This feeling of helplessness resulted in the loss of trust in police.

In Chapter 5, I discuss the findings of the study as it relates to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, limitations of the study, recommendations for further study, implications for social change, and end with a conclusion.

Interpretations of the Findings

In the literature review of this study, I focused on the historical relationship between African Americans and police, trust of police, stop and frisk, police brutality, police training and community policing programs, "the talk," and learned helplessness. Although research had been previously conducted on this topic, researchers in the field suggested that research continue to be conducted. This study adds to an existing body of knowledge to educate future scholars. The findings from this study have confirmed that African American men's negative personal experiences with police have impacted their trust of police. These findings also expand on previous findings from past research.

In this study, the findings are represented by the following emergent themes: encounters with the police, helplessness and what trust looks like with police.

Finding 1: Encounters With the Police

The first finding is that participants of this study described having a negative encounter with the police, and their responses indicated that there were different levels of encounters. Encounters consisted of verbal aggression, physical aggression, and firearms being pointed at them. These encounters evoked feelings of anger, sadness, and betrayal from the participants. Participants described that their encounters with the police were based on fear of the police towards them. Many participants in this study believed that the police look at them, and the police are fearful of them because of their race and size and how they may speak and dress. Several participants described being approached by police officers that already had their firearms drawn, with hands shaking and what looked like fear in their eyes. Several participants felt that in that moment if they would have moved

or even spoke wrong, they might have been killed. Along with the worry of being killed, these encounters left the participants feeling helpless. The participants of this study experienced mistreatment by the police, being accused of things that they did not do and beaten severely. As one participant stated, I "ain't even do nothing." Many participants referred to their encounter with the police as "being treated like animals" and "being treated as if we are nothing."

Past research has indicated that African American men have experienced a significant amount of mistreatment at the hands of law enforcement, which has impacted their trust of police (Obasogie & Newman, 2017). The number of negative police encounters experienced by African American men has grown substantially to the point of now being considered a significant public health concern (Obasogie & Newman, 2017). Aymer (2019) highlighted the emotional and psychological harm African American men have expressed due to these negative encounters, including strong feelings of anger, agitation, and confusion. Several participants of this study feel that implementing new training for members of law enforcement will help lower the number of negative encounters African American men have with the police, which would help with their trust of police. The findings of the current study are consistent with the existing body of literature highlighting the negative personal experiences of African American men with police and their trust of police (see Novich & Hunt, 2018; Smith Lee & Robinson, 2019).

The understanding that African American men have is that negative encounters with the police are something that have happened for many years and will continue to happen. Many participants viewed these types of encounters as a part of their culture.

Although many African American men view these encounters as something they have little to no control over, many still hope for change.

Finding 2: Helplessness

The second finding is that participants of this study described a feeling of helplessness during their encounters with police. They felt the need to comply with the police even though they believed the police were wrong, which left participants feeling as though their rights were violated. Feelings of anger and frustration were common among the participants, especially when describing watching other encounters between police and African American men. A common reaction from all the participants was that they avoid the police as a result of this feeling of helplessness. This sense of helplessness seemed to increase for individuals who reported unlawful actions by the police and had their reports appear to go no further than the front desk of the police station. The feeling of helplessness that the participants reported contributed to the significant decrease in their trust of police.

Past research has suggested that African American men are exposed to police violence, in the form of police killings of others and being physically and verbally assaulted, that has contributed to their sense of helplessness (Smith Lee & Robinson, 2019). Moreover, when African American men feel a sense of helplessness, it can then produce psychological arousal, avoidance, and negative mood and cognition (Smith Lee & Robinson, 2019). The current findings are consistent with the existing body of literature that has highlighted African American men's feeling of helplessness during their encounters with the police. African American men continue to battle with this sense

of helplessness due to their negative encounters with the police. With daily negative encounters with law enforcement, it seems to be challenging for many African American men to have a different thought process other than helplessness.

Finding 3: What Trust looks Like With Police

The final finding of this study relates to what trust looks like with police for African American men after they have had an encounter with the police. The participants were unanimous in sharing that they trusted the police as children; however, those feelings of trust changed either after having "the talk" with their parents or after their first negative encounter with the police. Participants of this study expressed feelings of anxiety and fear. Not reporting acts of violence, such as witnessed crimes, appears to be a direct and important result of not trusting the police among the participants, which is a huge disservice to the African American community. However, due to the negative encounters that have occurred between African American men and the police, that appears to be a risk that many are willing to take. Many participants believe that they are safer not reporting the acts of violence, keeping the police out of the community, and ignoring the violence or managing the violence as they see fit. Participants seem to have the mind frame that the community will take care of itself.

Past research has suggested that the level of trust given to the police is determined by how an individual has been treated by the police (Highwater & Esmail, 2015). Indeed, Akinlabi (2020) stated that there are African American communities that are taking matters into their own hands, seeking out the individuals who have committed wrongful acts towards them, and resolving the issue however they see fit. Several participants in

the current study shared this belief, believed that instead of informing the police of any crimes against them or others, that they would take care of things themselves. These findings are consistent with the existing body of literature that has highlighted what trust of the police looks like now for African American men.

The many acts of violence by police officers towards African American men have negatively impacted how African American men view and trust the police. Trust is something that is earned, not something that is given out to anything or anyone. Once trust is lost it takes time to earn it back Earning back trust is something that the men and women in law enforcement will have to do as it relates to many African American men.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was Kelly's PCT. This theory focuses on how an individual anticipates future events based on how they process past events (Kelly, 1991). In PCT, there are specific beliefs an individual has due to certain experiences (Kelly, 1991). An individual then takes these beliefs and tests them; if similar incidents occur that result in different outcomes, the individual's construct outwardly changes. However, if the outcome is the same, the individual's beliefs are strengthened (Kelly, 1991). According to Kelly (1955), PCT begins as a basic assumption, which has been referred to as the fundamental postulate. This has been defined as an individual's processes that are psychologically channelized by the ways in which they anticipate events (i.e., whatever this said individual anticipates happening will determine their choice of actions). This postulate is broken down into eleven corollaries; however, for the purposes of this study, I have identified one specific corollary that was evident through

the interviews: the construction corollary. This corollary suggests that an individual approaches the future by looking at what appears to be a similar past experience and basing their actions on those previous events.

Throughout this study, the relationship between law enforcement and African American men and the resulting loss of trust in police have been highlighted. All the participants shared how they had a negative encounter with the police, and from that encounter, their trust of the police decreased. The original construct per PCT would be the participants' feelings of not being able to trust the police after their initial encounter. Each participant shared how they had additional encounters that solidified their original thoughts of being unable to trust the police. As PCT suggests, in order for the construct to be strengthened, a similar event needs to occur (Kelly, 1955). The participants in this study had similar events occur to them, so their constructs were strengthened. All the participants shared that due to their encounters with the police they will never trust the police.

Limitations of the Study

This study provided in-depth data detailing the negative personal experiences of African American men and how these experiences influenced their trust of police. However, this study had several limitations. Due to the current pandemic, I was unable to conduct face-to-face interviews with any of the participants, which limited my ability to see their full body and document their body language. The interviews were conducted via Zoom and FaceTime. Using Zoom and FaceTime limited my ability to probe in

interviews. Many of the participants were in a parked car or in a room in their homes with family members around, so their level of comfort may have been lower than ideal.

Another limitation was the main source of soliciting participants was social media. Many facilities were closed or required appointments for me to provide them with flyers, such as barbershops and hair salons. As a result of the primary source of solicitating participants being social media, a huge demographic of participants was excluded. Not everyone uses social media; therefore, older populations, for example, may have had less of an opportunity to take part in the study.

Recommendations

This study was conducted because I saw a need to bring awareness to the negative personal experiences that African American men have with the police and how their trust is impacted by these negative encounters. There have been studies conducted on this topic; however, Smith Lee and Robinson (2019) acknowledged that more research needs to be conducted on this topic to bring awareness to the issue. With the rise in media coverage and individuals beginning to take matters into their own hands and record the disturbing images, people are starting to see how often African American men are being victimized.

The current study filled a gap in the literature surrounding the negative personal experiences of African American men by police and how this impacts their trust of police. The participants in this study were African American men with an average age of 42.6 years old. Three recommendations have been identified based on the findings of this study. This study focused on African American male participants and did not focus on

any specific religion. I recommend that future research replicate this study, focusing on participants that reside outside of the United States. I did not limit the geographical location to the United States; however, this is the only country that I gained participants from. When looking at different media outlets I have noticed the rise in coverage of African American men in multiple countries. In Africa, the Special Anti-Robbery Squad has been recorded beating and killing African men. Protests have emerged to abolish this law enforcement unit. There has also been social media coverage of Black men in the United Kingdom who have had negative encounters with law enforcement. Bringing awareness to these issues could help law enforcement review their training programs and implement change.

A second recommendation would be to interview the mothers of African American men who have had negative encounters with the police. It would be interesting to hear the perspective of African American males' mothers and to hear how they perceive that their sons' behavior and or mental states change after their encounter with law enforcement. Researchers should identify if the mothers of these participants had the talk with their sons prior to their encounter. Also, how have the mothers of these participants been affected psychologically?

Lastly, I recommend future researchers to examine how the negative encounters have affected the African American male's mental health. There were several participants who mentioned feeling anxious. Researchers should look at the different levels of anxiety for participants and even depression. Researchers could possibly identify if participants have panic attacks when they think of or see police after their encounter and how their

level of anxiety and or depression affect their daily lives. Participants are not reporting needing to see a therapist and or attending trauma therapy as a result of their encounters with the police. Studying this increase of anxiety could help develop different models in counseling to address this specific issue.

Implications for Social Change

African American men have experienced mistreatment at the hands of the police at a much greater rate than any other race (Adedoyin et al., 2019). As a result of this mistreatment, the trust of African American men towards law enforcement has been impacted.

In the context of positive social change, addressing the issues of trust among African American men and law enforcement can positively affect communities in many ways, one being African American men feeling comfortable enough to report crimes, whether they have witnessed a crime or they were actual victims of a crime (Novich & Hunt, 2018). With more crimes being reported, police can have a heavier presence in certain areas, which will make residents in certain neighborhoods feel safer. The African American community will not find it necessary to have the talk with their children, educating them on ways to behave around law enforcement so that they will not be harmed. Different cultural competency and community policing programs can be created or improved so that the current gap in communication among African American men and the African American community can be bridged.

In Illinois, there has been an educational program developed called PMSP that is designed to assist police recruits in Illinois with being more culturally aware when

responding to individuals in the African American community (Schlosser et al., 2015). This program educates the police on the following topics: cultural awareness, sociohistorical knowledge, and tactical skills (Schlosser et al., 2015). Data has shown that when police attend this course as cadets it has been very impactful. This training would be helpful to officers to help identify their bias, which could result in a decrease in negative police interactions among police and African American men. When identifying how similar trainings could be managed, the police academy could duplicate this training and implement it while future officers are in training. For veteran officers this could be a yearly mandatory training that would have to be completed. With this program there is a high possibility for change as it relates to bridging the gap in communication among law enforcement and African American men, as well as a decline in negative encounters between African American men and law enforcement.

Lastly, African American men are being seen more in mental health facilities with increased levels of anxiety and depression due to these negative encounters and many are becoming physically ill. With the findings of this study the hope is that the negative encounters between African American men and police will decrease. This study has highlighted the limited amount of training and policing programs available that would educate police on the negative impact of their actions and how to identify certain bias that have contributed to these actions. With these findings, high ranking law enforcement individuals should take this information and educate themselves on the negative impact police have had on African American men. With this information they should create programs to educate members of law enforcement so that these negative encounters can

become positive encounters, while also bringing awareness to implicit bias. These programs should not only be limited to local law enforcement but should be used to educate the overall government. With the overall government having a better understanding of what encounters take place among African American men and law enforcement, the likelihood of holding members of law enforcement accountable can increase and African American men can begin to feel safe and heard.

Conclusion

In the current study, I used IPA to explore the negative personal experiences of African American men by police and how their trust has been impacted by these negative encounters. All the participants in this study experienced traumatic events that have shaped how they view the police. Not only have these experiences affected the participants directly, but they have also affected each of the participants' children. Due to their negative encounter, they have educated their children on how to engage with the police. This produces negative images in each of their children's mind of law enforcement, indirectly teaching them not to trust the police. This is a broken cycle within the African American community. A cycle that will continue unless there is change within law enforcement. This study could potentially change how African American men and the African American community as a whole can begin to trust law enforcement and not be fearful of them. A decrease in negative encounters with law enforcement can come from this study. Police will be able to identify their bias by cultural competency and community policing programs being created, and African

American men will not feel that sense of helplessness. The physical and psychological well-being of the African American community depends on this change.

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